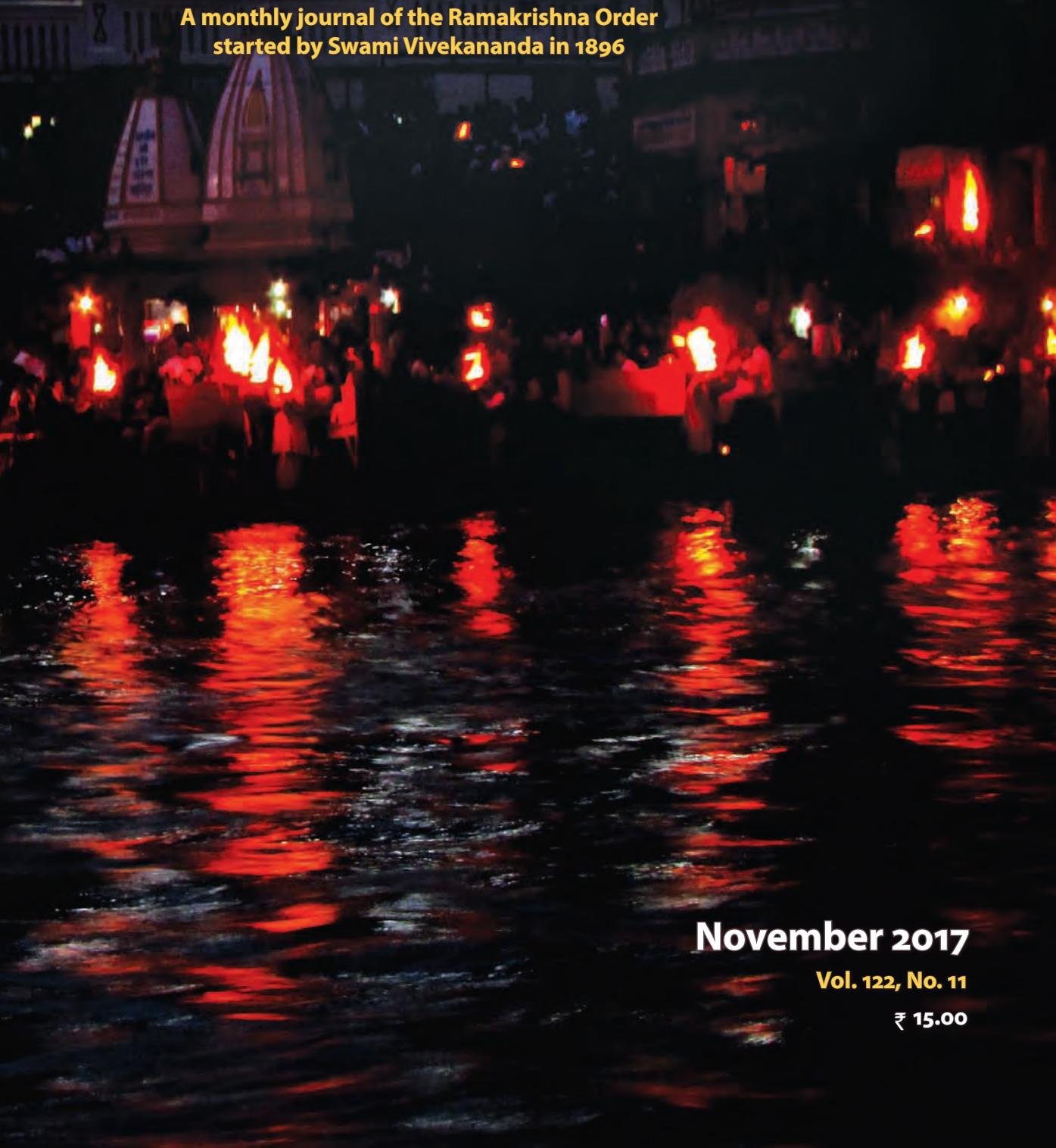


PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



November 2017

Vol. 122, No. 11

₹ 15.00

THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *True Purpose of Ethics I*

Two forces seem to be working throughout nature. One of these is constantly differentiating, and the other is as constantly unifying; the one making more and more for separate individuals, the other, as it were, bringing the individuals into a mass, bringing out sameness in the midst of all this differentiation. It seems that the action of these two forces enters into every department of nature and human life; the one making for caste, and the other breaking it down; one making for classes and privileges, and the other destroying them. The whole universe seems to be the battle-ground of these two forces. On the one hand, it is urged, that though this unifying process exists, we ought to resist it with all our might, because it leads towards death, that perfect unity is annihilation. It is differentiation that causes the phenomena that are before us; unification would reduce them all to a homogeneous and lifeless matter. Practically it is urged by the Brahmins when they want to uphold the divisions and castes. On the other hand, from the days of the Upanishads, the Buddhas, and Christs, and all other great preachers of religion comes out the one assertion of this unity and sameness. But human nature asserts itself. Those who have an advantage want to keep it, and if they find an argument, however one-sided and crude, they must cling to it. Coming to ethics we find a tremendous departure from this fight. For ethics is unity; its basis is love. The one aim of ethics is



this unity, this sameness. It is, perhaps, the only science which makes a bold departure from this fight. The absolute sameness of conditions, if that be the aim of ethics, appears to be impossible. That all men should be the same, could never be, however we might try. Men will be born differentiated; some will have more power than others; some will have natural capacities, others not; some will have perfect bodies, others not. We can never stop that. At the same time ring in our ears the wonderful words proclaimed by various teachers: 'Thus, seeing the same God equally present in all, the sage does not injure Self by the Self, and thus reaches the highest goal. Even in this life they have conquered relative existence whose minds are firmly fixed on this sameness; for God is pure, and God is the same to all. Therefore such are said to be living in God.' We cannot deny that this is the real idea; yet at the same time comes the difficulty that the sameness as regards external forms and position can never be attained. But what can be attained is elimination of privilege.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 1.421-25.



Managing Editor
Swami Muktidananda

Editor
Swami Narasimhananda

Associate Editor and Design
Swami Divyakripananda

Production Editor
Swami Chidekananda

Cover Design
Subhabrata Chandra

General Assistance
Swami Vimohananda

Circulation
Indrajit Sinha
Tapas Jana

EDITORIAL OFFICE
Prabuddha Bharata
Advaita Ashrama
PO Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt Champawat • 262 524
Uttarakhand, India
Tel: 91 • 96909 98179
prabuddhabharata@gmail.com
pb@advaitaashrama.org

Printed and Published by
Swami Vibhutmananda

PUBLICATION OFFICE
Advaita Ashrama
5 Dehi Entally Road
Kolkata • 700 014
West Bengal, India
Tel: 91 • 33 • 2289 0898
2284 0210 / 2286 6450 / 6483
mail@advaitaashrama.org

INTERNET EDITION
www.advaitaashrama.org

Contents

Traditional Wisdom 727

This Month 728

Editorial: All Improvement is False 729

On and About Sister Nivedita and Her Family 731

Sarada Sarkar

Gems of Memories: Reminiscences of 739

Swami Saradeshananda

Swami Shuklatmananda

Saga of Epic Proportions 751

Swami Sandarshanandananda

Balabodha: Dhyana 766

Traditional Tales: A Scene from the Ramayana 767

Reviews 769

Manana 771

Cover Photo: Arunoday Kundu

Reports 773

Subscribe to Prabuddha Bharata

- Become a Patron Subscriber and support the rich legacy left to all of us by Swami Vivekananda; patrons' names are published in *Prabuddha Bharata*.
- *Prabuddha Bharata* subscribers receive 10% discount on all Advaita Ashrama Publications.
- Send remittances in favour of '*Prabuddha Bharata*' only by bank draft or cheque to Advaita Ashrama, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, India.
Or, **subscribe online** at www.advaitaashrama.org. For bank transfer or other queries, please contact us by email at mail@advaitaashrama.org
- Please note that we do not accept out station cheques.

| <u>Subscription Rates</u> | <i>India & Nepal</i> | <i>Sri Lanka & Bangladesh</i> | <i>United Kingdom</i> | <i>Europe</i> | <i>USA & Canada</i> |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Annual | ₹ 150 | ₹ 1,100 | £ 45 | € 55 | \$ 60 (USD) |
| Three Years | ₹ 430 | ₹ 3,200 | £ 130 | € 160 | \$ 170 (USD) |
| Life (20 years) | ₹ 2,000 | — | — | — | — |
| Patron (25 years) | ₹ 3,000 | — | — | — | — |

Rates for online payment at www.advaitaashrama.org (by credit / debit card)

| | <i>India & Nepal</i> | <i>Sri Lanka & Bangladesh</i> | <i>USA, Canada & Europe</i> |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Annual | (USD) | \$ 3 | \$ 28 |
| Three Years | (USD) | \$ 8 | \$ 83 |
| Life (20 years) | (USD) | \$ 35 | — |
| Patron (25 years) | (USD) | \$ 60 | — |

(Rates in foreign currencies depend on current exchange rates and are therefore subject to change without notice)

Information for Subscribers

- Moving to a new address? Please let our Kolkata office know at least a month in advance so that your copy moves too.
- The number on the top line of your address label is your subscription number: please quote this number when writing to us. The month and year on the same line is the last month of your subscription.
- Subscriber copies are dispatched on the first or second day of every month. If you do not receive your copy by the last week of the month, please let us know so that we can send another copy.
- Renew your subscription online through our website.

Information for Contributors

- Unpublished original articles of universal and higher human interests pertaining to religion, spirituality, philosophy, psychology, education, values, and other social topics from competent writers of any country are considered for publication in *Prabuddha Bharata*.
- Articles should not exceed 2,500 words. Paucity of space precludes acceptance of longer articles for

publication, except in rare cases. Articles must be submitted in typed—and preferably electronic—form, with a 250-word abstract of the article.

- For all quotations in articles, adequate references—including name of author, title/publication, publisher with address, year of publication, and page number(s)—should be provided. Internet references should include name of author, website publisher, date, and full URL.
- The Editor does not accept responsibility for views expressed in any articles.
- Unsolicited articles are not individually acknowledged. The Editor will contact the contributor if an article is taken up for publication. Email addresses should be furnished where possible.
- The Editor reserves the right to accept, reject, or effect necessary changes in articles on which no correspondence is possible.
- *Prabuddha Bharata* does not undertake to return unsolicited materials.
- Articles published in *Prabuddha Bharata* cannot be reproduced elsewhere without written permission from the Managing Editor.

You know

how important
Prabuddha Bharata is

in spreading the spiritual nectar of the Ramakrishna movement, the invigorating ideas of Vedanta, and the insights of Indian values and culture. *Prabuddha Bharata* also brings you inspirational reading material on a wide variety of topics of global interest.

You value this journal and the cause it represents, and would surely like to share it with others.



How you can contribute:

- **Gift** subscriptions to your friends and family, and encourage your thinking friends to subscribe.
- **Sponsor** a subscription for a worthy library or institution known to you, or let us choose one.
- **Contribute** to the **Prabuddha Bharata Permanent Fund** and help ensure the longevity of the journal.
- **Advertise** your company in the *Prabuddha Bharata* and encourage your colleagues to do so.



Yes, I would like to

- Gift** _____ life subscriptions to *Prabuddha Bharata* at ₹ 2000 each
- Sponsor** _____ libraries and institutions for 20 years at ₹ 2000 each
- Donate** ₹ _____ to the *Prabuddha Bharata Permanent Fund*

Amount of ₹ _____ is enclosed herewith by draft/money order

PLEASE PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS

Your Name _____

Address _____

PIN _____

Email address _____

Phone No _____

Date _____

Details of DD _____

Send to: Advaita Ashrama
5 Dehi Entally Road
Kolkata 700 014

Send my gift subscriptions to:



SHARE YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE !

GIFT

**PRABUDDHA
BHARATA**
or AWAKENED INDIA

TO LIBRARIES

**PRABUDDHA BHARATA
LIBRARY INITIATIVE**

Let many more benefit from the thought-provoking contents read by you every month in Prabuddha Bharata. Join the Prabuddha Bharata Library Initiative by gifting a life subscription to a library. You can either gift it to the library of your choice or to the library selected by us. Come, sponsor as many libraries as you can and spread the ethos of Indian Culture.

Prabuddha Bharata Library Initiative:

Name of Sponsor

238. Sri Hara Kasturi Memorial Trust, Kolkata.
239. Sri Hara Kasturi Memorial Trust, Kolkata.

Beneficiary Library

- Khanchi G A Vidyapith, Purba Medinipur.
Gopalpur High School, Purba Medinipur.

Prabuddha Bharata Patron Subscribers:

637. Prabhat Kanti Routh, Serampore.

638. M U C Women's College, Burdwan.

Send my gift subscriptions to:

PLEASE PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS

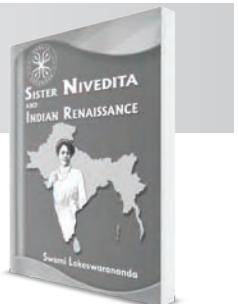


LIFE CARE • 204/1B LINTON STREET, KOLKATA 700014

Book treasures

Sister Nivedita and Indian Renaissance

Swami Lokeswarananda



Miss Margaret Noble became Sister Nivedita under the personal and rigorous training of Swami Vivekananda. True to her Master's wish, amidst various difficulties and privation, she not only did phenomenal service in the field of girls' education, she also aroused the dampening Indian consciousness and awakened it to its own glory.

Pages 56 | Price ₹15
Packing & Postage: ₹22

This booklet, authored by Swami Lokeswarananda, sketches her life and depicts her contribution to Indian renaissance in a lucid and inspiring way. The booklet can be a source of inspiration for both the young and the old.

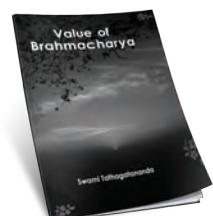


Pages 72 | Price ₹35
Packing & Postage: ₹25

The Purusha Sukta: An Exegesis

Swami Harshananda

Purusha Sukta is one of the Vedic hymns par excellence. It is, however, as much enigmatic as it is popular. It is, in fact, adoration, worship and philosophy rolled in one. This book, authored by Swami Harshananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, succinctly yet effectively gives an exegesis with free translation of this Sukta throwing light on its import and value.



Pages 48 | Price ₹20
Packing & Postage: ₹22

Value of Brahmacharya

Swami Tathagatananda

This book deals with various aspects of Brahmacharya or chastity, explaining why and how of living a life of self-control and holiness. A guide for all spiritual seekers, especially the youth.



Please write to:

Sri Ramakrishna Math, 31, Ramakrishna Math Road, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004, India

Phone: 044-24621110, Email: publication@chennaimath.org

Buy books online at istore.chennaimath.org and eBooks at www.vedantaebooks.org

Character is Life

B.E. / B. Tech

- B.E. - Aeronautical Engineering
- B.E. - Automobile Engineering
- B.E. - Civil Engineering
- B.E. - Computer Science and Engineering
- B.E. - Electrical and Electronics Engineering
- B.E. - Electronics and Communication Engineering
- B.E. - Electronics and Instrumentation Engineering
- B.E. - Mechanical Engineering
- B.E. - Mechatronics Engineering
- B.Tech. - Bio-Technology
- B.Tech. - Information Technology
- B.Tech. - Textile Technology
- B.Tech. - Fashion Technology

M.E. / M.Tech

- M.E. - Applied Electronics
- M.E. - CAD/CAM
- M.E. - Communication Systems
- M.E. - Computer Science and Engineering
- M.E. - Energy Engineering
- M.E. - Embedded systems
- M.E. - Industrial Engineering
- M.E. - Power Electronics and Drives
- M.E. - Structural Engineering
- M.Tech. - Bio Technology
- M.Tech. - Apparel Technology and Management
- M.Tech. - Textile Technology

- MCA - Master of Computer Applications
- MBA - Master of Business Administration

Ph.D PROGRAMMES :

- Bio-Technology • Chemistry • Civil Engineering
- Computer Science and Engineering
- Master of Business Administration Mechanical Engineering
- Mechatronics Engineering • Textile Technology
- Electronics and Communication Engineering



KUMARAGURU COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

is a premier Educational Institution in South India, offering high quality Engineering and Management Education for the past three decades. KCT was founded with the vision to create transformation in India through Technical Education. Spread over a campus area of 150 Acres, the college has over 5,600 exemplary students. Excellent Academic & Research ambience, state of the art infrastructure & amenities, collaborations with 8 foreign universities, experienced and committed faculties are the other unique features of this Institution. KCT STPI-IT PARK – is functioning under the STPI umbrella with 2,00,000 sq.ft. of space. A record placement history in reputed Multinational and National Companies is a live testimony to the quality of education that is imparted at KCT.

CEAD – Center of Excellence in Advanced Design was established to bring "SCIENCE TO ENGINEERING" culture using "HIGH PERFORMANCE COMPUTING" and address the technological needs for the country through quality education and training.

iQUBE – Is a KCT Student's Initiative – Technology Incubation Center that aims at people working on their ideas to see it as a product.



KUMARAGURU
college of technology
character is life

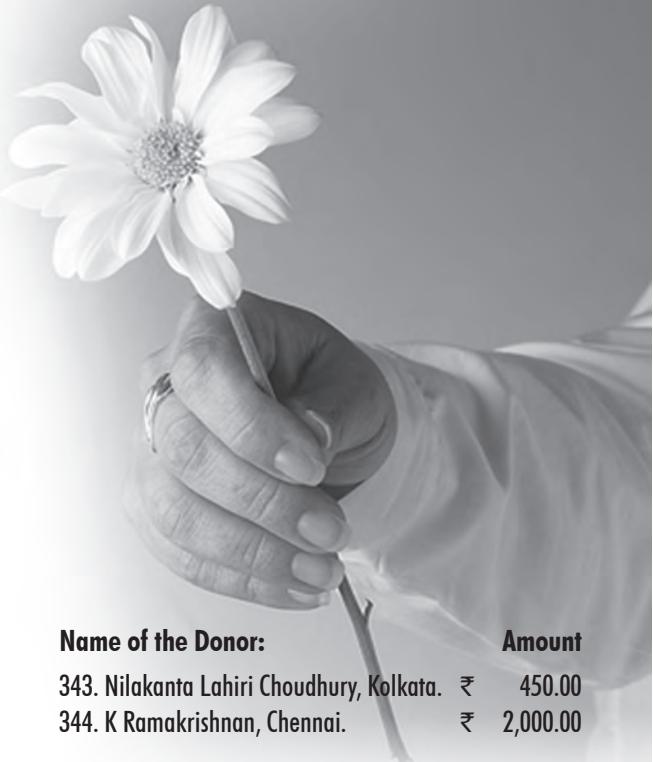
Approved by AICTE | Affiliated to Anna University | Accredited by NAAC | ISO 9001-2008

Coimbatore - 641049 Tamil Nadu INDIA

CONTRIBUTE TO THE PRABUDDHA BHARATA CORPUS FUND!

Contribute your mite to the Prabuddha Bharata Corpus Fund and actively participate in this venture to propagate Indian culture, values, philosophy, and spirituality. Could there be a better way to show your appreciation?

You can send your contributions by cheque or drafts favouring '*Prabuddha Bharata*' to 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700014, India or make your donations online at www.advaitaashrama.org. All donations are exempt from Income tax under section 80G.



| Name of the Donor: | Amount |
|---|------------|
| 343. Nilakanta Lahiri Choudhury, Kolkata. | ₹ 450.00 |
| 344. K Ramakrishnan, Chennai. | ₹ 2,000.00 |





An artist's impression of our proud Indian values
Lead with humility – our core values teach us to be aggressively efficient, yet remain sensitively human.
Quite naturally then, our passion for logistics is an art.
A medium that goes beyond the austerity of commerce.
A canvas that portrays relationship above anything else.
Our work has impressed our customers and critics alike.
And we have regaled in the beautiful colors of trust,
like a true Indian.

FEI Cargo Limited
• freight management unlimited
www.feicargo.in

Registered Office: A-103 Mangalya Marol-Maroshi Road, Andheri (East)
Mumbai 400059 Tel: 022-4236 9911
Fax: 022-2920 4312 info@feicargo.in

FEI
Aiming Higher

TRADITIONAL WISDOM

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Maitrayaniya Upanishad

November 2017
Vol. 122, No. 11

मैत्रायणीयोपनिषद्

अथावशिष्टं यतवागश्नात्यतोऽद्विर्भूय एवोपरिष्टात्परिदधात्याचान्तो भूत्वात्मेज्यानः
प्राणोऽग्निर्विश्वोऽसीति च द्वाभ्यामात्मानमभिध्यायेत् । प्राणोऽग्निः परमात्मा वै पञ्चवायुः समाश्रितः ।
स प्रीतः प्रीणातु विश्वं विश्वभुक् । विश्वोऽसि वैश्वानरोऽसि विश्वं त्वया धार्यते जायमानं । विश्वन्तु
त्वामाहुतयश्च सर्वाः प्रजास्तत्र यत्र विश्वामृतोऽसीति । एवं न विधिना खल्वनेनात्मत्वं पुनरुपैति ।

॥६.९॥

*Athavashishtam yata-vag-ashnaty-atoddbhir-bhuya evoparishtat-paridadhaty-achanto bhutva-
atmejyanah pranognir-vishvo'siti cha dvabhyan-am-atmanam-abhidhyayet. Prano'gnih paramatma
vai panchavayuh samashritah. Sa pritah prinatu vishvam vishvabhuk. Vishvo'si vaishvanaro'si
vishvam tvaya dharyate jayamanam. Vishan-tu tvam-ahutayashcha sarvah prajas-tatra yatra
vishvamrito'siti. Evam na vidhina khalv-anenattannatvam punar-upaiti.* (6.9)

Then one eats the remainder, with restrained voice, in silence. Then, afterwards, one again swathes with water. So, having sipped water, having made the sacrifice to the self, one should meditate on the self with the two formulas, 'As breath and fire', and 'You are all'. 'As breath and fire, the highest self has entered in with the five airs. May he when pleased himself, please all, the enjoyer of all.' You are all, you are the Vaishvanara fire. All that is born is supported by you. Let all oblations enter into you. There creatures live where you, the all-immortal are. So one who eats according to this rule comes not again into the condition of food. (6.9)

THIS MONTH

IMPROVEMENT IS HIGHLY OVERRATED. Excellence and improvement are not real. These and related issues are discussed in **All Improvement is False**.

Sister Nivedita's life and teachings are remnants of a bygone era that beckons us to ignite our lives with at least an iota of inspiration that revolutionised that glorious life. Hers was an unbelievably active life and newer and newer material is being discovered even today, after 150 years of her birth. Sarada Sarkar, researcher and history teacher from Croydon, UK has relentlessly pursued all connections of Sister Nivedita and has established contact with her living relatives. To one such relative, Chris Orpen, she sent the January 2017 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, which was focussed on the theme 'Sister Nivedita: Offered to India'. Orpen wrote to Sarada Sarkar with full of appreciation and also with rare archival material on and by Sister Nivedita. The second instalment of the facsimiles of that material and their transcription is being provided in **On and About Sister Nivedita and Her Family**. These papers include Sister Nivedita's niece Ruth Olave Wilson aka Grancy's account of Sister Nivedita and an interesting letter from a publisher to Sister Nivedita.

Swami Saradhananda was an illuminated beacon among the disciples of Sri Sarada Devi. His spiritual wisdom and insight have inspired the lives of countless spiritual aspirants. Swami Shuklatmananda, a monk at Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Haridwar, served Swami Saradhananda for ten years from 1978 to 1988 in

Vrindavan. He shares with the readers his precious and blissful experiences in the holy company of Swami Saradhananda in the seventh instalment of **Gems of Memories: Reminiscences of Swami Saradhananda**.

Swami Sandarshananda, a monk at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, Kolkata, in the eleventh and final instalment of **Saga of Epic Proportions**, shows how Sister Nivedita supported Dr Jagadish Chandra Bose and gives a glimpse of her multifaceted personality.

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Dhyana**. Understanding this word is necessary to understand this spiritual practice that is integral to maintaining a harmonious life.

Death is a passing phase in the transmigratory cycle of a *jiva*. Death should not be grieved and one should be very careful about the kind of actions that one performs, as the results of these actions determine the nature of birth one takes after one's death. This message is learnt from the words of Sri Rama in the story **A Scene from the Ramayana**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Arulneri Kathaigal*.

Sean Meighoo, Assistant Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at Emory University, Atlanta, USA, has written the book **The End of the West and Other Cautionary Tales**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

All Improvement is False

EVOLUTION IS INHERENT in creation. All manifestations in this universe, living or nonliving, show an innate tendency to change. Change is often considered synonymous with progress. And who does not want progress? The one thing that is strongly impressed upon the mind of a child is the need for excellence, the need for being ahead of others. To be sure of excellence, to be sure of getting ahead, it is necessary that one knows of one's present status. To understand one's present status and to measure the possibility of excellence, one has to be aware of the improvement one has made so far.

We would be looking at improvement from the spiritual standpoint. Paradoxically, it is the urge to improve that often comes in the way of improvement! A Formula One driver would do a great job without bothering about the competitors than when worrying about whether one has been overtaken. The fundamental question would be: can there really be any improvement? Is it even possible to improve? If one were to think deeply, one would immediately realise that all claims of improvement are just claims of having created an alternative possibility. For example, if a person tries to improve the speed of a car, such an improvement would only be a copy of the innumerable ranges of speeds that already exist in Nature. In short, there can never be a speed that does not already exist. What would happen is that human beings would find newer ways of tapping the resources already found in Nature.

Let us take another example. Suppose a

student is unable to perform on a par with the other students in the class, the teachers and parents would naturally get concerned and help the

It is the urge to improve that often comes in the way of improvement.

student to increase the performance. But, the student would be able to perform only to the extent it was possible even when that student was not performing well. For instance, if this particular student had a permanent disability, that student could never improve the performance irrespective of the efforts of the teachers, parents, classmates, and friends.

Similar is the case with changes in the properties of objects. A particular property of an object cannot change unless the object itself is changed in some manner. Every time we attempt to bring about an improvement, we are essentially trying to change the very nature of that which we are trying to improve. For example, if an engine can produce 'x' amount of energy, one can at best make the engine perform to its utmost capacity but can never make the engine produce an energy level which is more than 'x'. So, in the context of an engine, an improvement in performance only means an increased success in attaining the optimum level of performance.

Considering the supreme Truth that there is only one reality, Brahman, all ideas of improvement are well within the realm of ignorance. As we have seen earlier, to measure improvement, one has to know one's present status. And if

one's real status is beyond time, space, and causation, then there is nothing to improve. In all improvements of space, time, and causation, what is perceived as improvement is only a shift in different points from locations, time periods, or cause and effect. If our true nature is beyond space, time, and causation, or in other words, if our true nature encompasses all notions of space, time, and causation, how could we shift from one point to another? For example, if a person was unaware of a necklace one was wearing, and suddenly became aware of it; can such a flash of awareness be called an improvement? Nothing actually changed apart from the awareness of the necklace.

Reality is like the above mentioned necklace problem. Now, let us see how it affects spiritual aspirants. Spiritual practices are attempts to bring about a clarity of the mind. No improvement of reality or truth is possible, but only one's awareness of the reality or truth can be brought about. So, spiritual practices are attempts to bring awareness. As far as awareness is concerned, there can only be two situations: either one can have awareness or not have awareness. An improvement in awareness is impossible. In our necklace example, one can be either aware of the necklace or not be aware of the necklace; there cannot be an improvement in the knowledge of the necklace! But, there could be an improvement in one's eyesight or in one's sense of touch. These two aspects, like many other aspects of this universe, are very much within the realm of ignorance. But, even in these two aspects, improvement is nothing but attaining or progressing towards the optimal output. A damaged eye or a dead skin would be unable to perceive anything, no matter how sincere the effort might be.

Swami Vivekananda used to say that any individual can accomplish anything that one wants.

This idea has been preached before and after Swamiji. How is it possible that any individual can accomplish anything that that person desires? Desire is thought. Thoughts are created by desires and desires are further created by thoughts. If someone has thought something, that particular thing is possible. What we generally call improvement is the achievement of the manifestation of this thought. That is why science fiction eventually turns into scientific reality. When a person has envisioned the realisation of the ever-free Atman-Brahman, it is indeed possible. We are unable to achieve it because we are obsessed with our present status and the perception of others about our status. For instance, before the aeroplane was invented, everyone believed that it was impossible to fly. Same is true with the spaceship and numerous other inventions. However, these inventions became possible because of some people, who refused to concur with the limitation of their present status that others were imposing on them. These inventors did not invent or improve anything. They just showed another level of excellence that could have been attained by anyone, any time before them.

In spiritual life, the quest of the spiritual aspirant should not be to achieve improvement but to arrive at a clarity of what is the truth, that is, what is possible, and get established in that truth with a strong and unshakeable conviction. Even if one does not visit the moon, it is impossible to remove our conviction that the moon exists. Similarly, more than the realisation of the truth itself, it is very much important that one is convinced without even a minuscule iota of doubt that this apparent universe is false and that the body-mind conglomerate is false. With this conviction in place, one cannot get deviated from the path of spirituality, though one may experience ebbs and tides.



Portrait of Sister Nivedita Displayed at Bose Institute Museum, Darjeeling

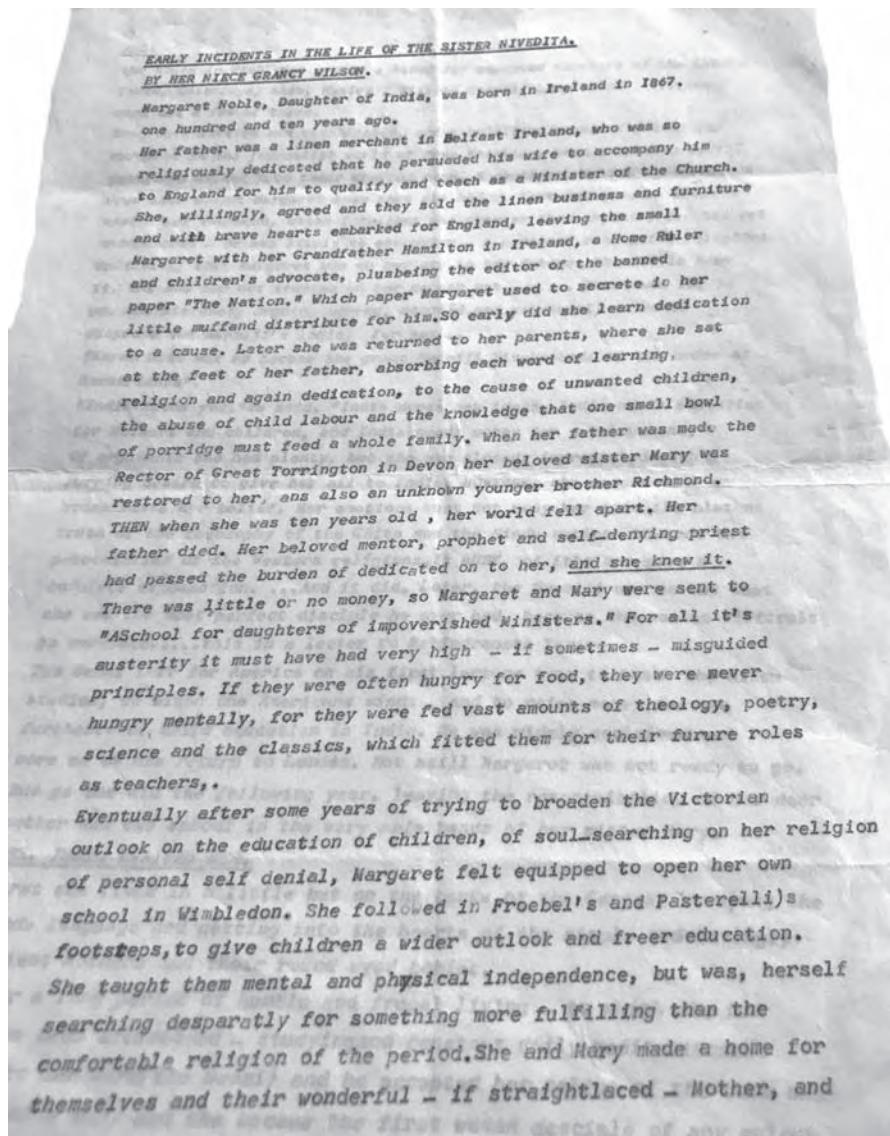
On and About Sister Nivedita and Her Family

Sarada Sarkar

ON 4 JULY 2017, Chris Orpen sent me a parcel of Sister Nivedita's family papers. The first instalment of this collection I had put together and it was published in the October 2017 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata* as 'Sister Nivedita's Unpublished Letter and Family Papers'.¹

The papers were too many for one issue of the journal and the second instalment of the papers are being given here.

Sister Nivedita's sister Mary or May Wilson had a daughter named Ruth Olave Wilson aka Grancy, who has written the following piece on Nivedita:



Page 1

Ruth Olave Wilson aka Grancy on Sister Nivedita

[Page 1]

*Early Incidents in the Life of the Sister Nivedita
by her Niece Grancy Wilson*

Margaret Noble, Daughter of India, was born in Ireland in 1867, one hundred and ten years ago.² Her father was a linen merchant in Belfast, Ireland, who was so religiously dedicated

that he persuaded his wife to accompany him to England for him to qualify and teach as a Minister of the Church. She, willingly, agreed and they sold the linen business and furniture and with brave hearts embarked for England, leaving the small Margaret with her grandfather Hamilton in Ireland, a Home Ruler and children's advocate, plus being the editor of the

AND:
the house in Wimbledon became a haven for advanced thinkers of the 1890's
Yeats, Coleridge, Shaw, Huxley, William Morris, Longfellow, W.T.Stead
were but a few of these.

They were settled and established, and a brilliant career foreseen for
Margaret in the journalist world of free thinking, when a certain Indian
gentleman walked into their drawing room. A gentleman called "Naren Dutt."
From that moment Margaret knew that she had at last met someone whose
vision was enormous, whose intellect was greater than anything she had yet
encountered - or was likely to encounter - a person of such gift, religious
uplifting, that Margaret was on her way to her future. She little knew
it, but she had not started on her career yet..... There was far to
go. She listened, argued, agreed, accused and vehemently tried to
disprove the Swamiji's logic. For yes...

"Naren Dutt was to become the great Swamiji Vivekananda of the order of
Ramakrishna".

"India needs you." He said. "India needs new ideas. India needs education
for Mothers and children, and India needs money for development."

Of arguments she had plenty, but she was already impregnated with a
burning desire to give her all to India. HOWEVER, she needed time to
consolidate her belief. Her emotions must not sway her into the blatant
truth of the theosophy of the Gita and the Hindu outlook towards the
parochialism of the Western religions. It MUST, of its own, give a
complete explanation. ...And it did. Later, the Swamiji was to say that
she was the most perfect disciple he ever had, because she was so difficult
to convince.....this is in a letter to Rabindranath Tagore.

The Swami left for America on his first lecture tour to teach the Hindu
studies, to widen the Americans minds, and to raise money for the
furtherance of child education in India. He was widely acclaimed and
more so on his return to London. But still Margaret was not ready to go.
But go she did the following year, leaving the responsibility of her dear
mother and the school in the very safe hands of her sister Mary.

YES, INDIA AWAITED HER.

First she lived in a little hut on the banks of the Ganges, studying the
Hindu language and getting into the hearts of the simple and lovingly
patient Mothers and their round eyed babies.

After a long period of humble and frugal living - to which she had
always been accustomed - studying and constant daily meditations she
went to her Guru (the Swami) and he accepted her taking of the vows and
habit of a nun, and she became the first woman disciple of any colour
of the Swamiji Vivekananda of the Order of Ramakrishna, and they called her

Page 2

Ruth Olave Wilson aka Grancy on Sister Nivedita

banned paper *The Nation*. Which paper Margaret used to secrete in her little muff and distribute for him. So early did she learn dedication to a cause. Later she was returned to her parents, where she sat at the feet of her father, absorbing each word of learning, religion, and again dedication, to the cause of unwanted children, the abuse of child labour, and the knowledge that

one small bowl of porridge must feed a whole family. When her father was made the Rector of Great Torrington in Devon, her beloved sister Mary was restored to her, and also an unknown younger brother Richmond. Then when she was ten years old, her world fell apart. Her father died. Her beloved mentor, prophet, and self-denying priest had passed the burden of

[being the] dedicated on to her, *and she knew it.*

There was little or no money, so Margaret and Mary were sent to a ‘school for daughters of impoverished Ministers’. For all its austerity it must have had very high—if sometimes—misguided principles. If they were often hungry for food, they were never hungry mentally, for they were fed vast amounts of theology, poetry, science, and the classics, which fitted them for their future roles as teachers.

Eventually after some years of trying to broaden the Victorian outlook on the education of children, of soul-searching on her religion of personal self-denial, Margaret felt equipped to open her own school in Wimbledon. She followed in Froebel’s and Pestalozzi’s footsteps, to give children a wider outlook and freer education. She taught them mental and physical independence, but was, herself searching desperately for something more fulfilling than the comfortable religion of the period. She and Mary made a home for themselves and their wonderful—if straightlaced—Mother, and

[Page 2]

And:

the house in Wimbledon became a haven for advanced thinkers of the 1890s. Yeats, Coleridge, Shaw, Huxley, William Morris, Longfellow, W T Stead, were but a few of these.

They were settled and established, and a brilliant career foreseen for Margaret in the journalist world of free thinking, when a certain Indian gentleman walked into their drawing room. A gentleman called ‘Naren Dutt’. From that moment Margaret knew that she had at last met someone whose vision was enormous, whose intellect was greater than anything she had yet encountered—or was likely to encounter—a person of such gift, religious uplifting, that Margaret was on her way to her future. She little knew it, but she had not started on her career yet. ... There was far to go. She listened,

argued, agreed, accused, and vehemently tried to disprove the Swamiji’s logic. For yes ... ‘Naren Dutt was to become the great Swamiji Vivekananda of the Order of Ramakrishna.’

‘India needs you,’ he said, ‘India needs new ideas. India needs education for Mothers and children, and India needs money for development.’ Of arguments she had plenty, but she was already impregnated with a burning desire to give her all to India. However, she needed time to consolidate her belief. Her emotions must not sway her into the blatant truth of the theosophy of the Gita and the Hindu outlook towards the parochialism of the Western religions. It *must*, of its own, give a complete explanation. ... And it did. Later, the Swamiji was to say that she was the most perfect disciple he ever had, because she was so difficult to convince ... this in a letter to Rabindranath Tagore.

The Swami left for America on his first lecture tour to teach the Hindu studies, to widen the American minds, and to raise money for the furtherance of child education in India. He was widely acclaimed and more so on his return to London. But, still Margaret was not ready to go. But go she did the following year, leaving the responsibility of her dear mother and the school in the very safe hands of her sister Mary.

Yes. India Awaited Her.

First she lived in a little hut on the banks of the Ganges, studying the Hindu language and getting into the hearts of the simple and lovingly patient Mothers and their round-eyed babies.

After a long period of humble and frugal living—to which she had always been accustomed—studying constant daily meditations, she went to her Guru (the Swami) and he accepted her taking vows and habit of a nun,³ and she became the first woman disciple of *any colour* of the Swamiji Vivekananda of the Order of Ramakrishna, and they called her

"THE SISTER NIVEDITA"..... The white sister.

The Brahmins built her a room above their beloved monastery at Belur up the river, and from there she began her great career of teaching the Hindu woman to become a living part of the community and to accept more responsibility.

Her Guru taught her day and night, and she opened her first school in Bose Bhara Lane, ...now Nivedita Lane. She wrote many books, the most famous being "The Web of Indian Life" ...and "The Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists". These are both standard works for students of Indian History at Oxford University.

In 1967 India honoured her centenary by the issue of a commemoration stamp, and this year has seen yet another book written of her... by Barbara Foxe, and called "The Long Journey Home."

However Perhaps the most beautiful book she wrote was "The Cradle Tales of Hinduism", garnered from the stories the simple Hindu mothers told to their children at nightfall, and which Nivedita learned as a humble novitiate on the banks of the Ganges.

Page 3

Ruth Olave Wilson aka Grancy on Sister Nivedita

[Page 3]

'The Sister Nivedita' ... The white sister.⁴

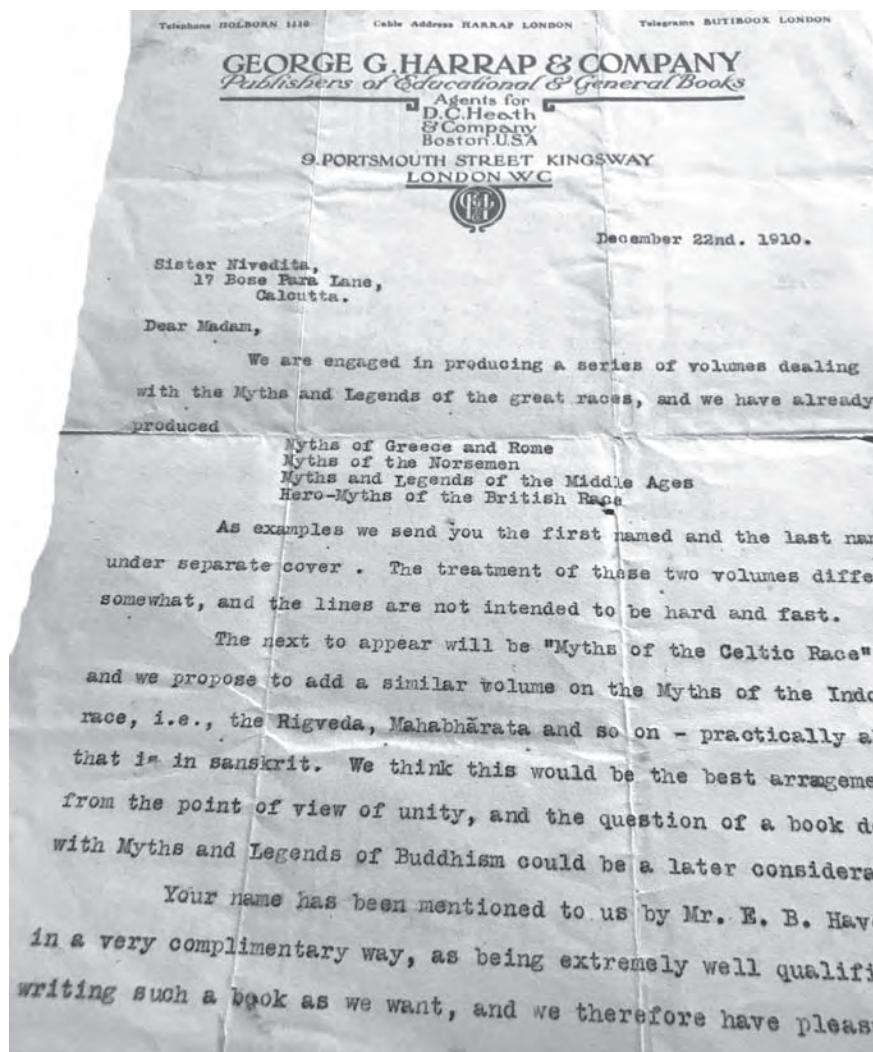
The Brahmins built her a room above their beloved monastery at Belur up the river, and from there she began her great career of teaching the Hindu woman to become a living part of the community and to accept more responsibility.

Her Guru taught her day and night, and she opened her first school in Bose Bhara Lane [Bosepara Lane], now Nivedita Lane. She wrote many books, the most famous being *The Web of Indian Life* and *The Myths of the Hindus*

and Buddhists. These are both standard works for students of Indian history at the Oxford University.

In 1967, India honoured her centenary by the issue of a commemoration stamp, and this year has seen yet another book written of her by Barbara Foxe, and called *The Long Journey Home*.

However, perhaps the most *beautiful* book she wrote was *The Cradle Tales of Hinduism*, garnered from the stories the simple Hindu mothers told to their children at nightfall, and which Nivedita learned as a humble novitiate on the banks of the Ganges.



Page 1

*Letter to Sister Nivedita by a publisher,
George G Harrap and Company*

Among the papers sent by Orpen, there was an interesting letter sent by a publisher, George G Harrap and Company, which is given here:

[Page 1]

December 22nd. 1910.

Sister Nivedita,
17 Bose Para Lane,
Calcutta.

Dear Madam,

We are engaged in producing a series of volumes dealing with the Myths and Legends of the great races, and we have already produced

inviting you to undertake the task if your other engagements permit. The book should be similar in size to the volumes we are sending, and the treatment should move, roughly, on the same lines. The stories, that is, should be introduced by satisfactory reference to the mythological conditions etc. from which they spring. They should appear in the book as manifestations of the life of an ancient people. We should, of course, illustrate the volume freely.

Our terms for such a book are: One hundred pounds for all rights, paid, £50 on completion of the MS., and £50 on publication of the book. Should you accept our offer please go forward once and let us know by what date you could complete the MS.

We are, dear Madam,

Faithfully yours,

pp. GEORGE G. HARRAP & Co.

Ems

Page 2

*Letter to Sister Nivedita by a publisher,
George G Harrap and Company*

Myths of Greece and Rome

Myths of the Norsemen

Myths and Legends of the Middle Ages

Hero-Myths of the British Race

As examples we send you the first named and the last named under separate cover. The treatment of these two volumes differ somewhat, and the lines are not intended to be hard and fast.

The next to appear will be 'Myths of the Celtic Race' and we propose to add a similar volume on the Myths of the Indo race, i.e., the Rigveda, Mahabharata and so on—practically all that is in Sanskrit. We think this would be

the best arrangement from the point of view of unity, and the question of a book dealing with Myths and Legends of Buddhism could be a later consideration.

Your name has been mentioned to us by Mr. E. B. Havell in a very complimentary way, as being extremely well qualified for writing such a book as we want, and we therefore have pleasure in

[Page 2]

inviting you to undertake the task if your other engagements permit so. The book should be

similar in size to the volumes we are sending, and the treatment should move, roughly, on the same lines. The stories, that is, should be introduced by satisfactory reference to the mythological conditions etc. from which they spring. They should appear in the book of manifestations of the life of an ancient people. We should, of course, illustrate the volume freely.

Our terms for such a book are: One hundred pounds for all rights, paid. £50 on completion of the MS., and £50 on publication of the book. Should you accept our offer please go forward at once and let us know by what date you could complete the MS.

We are, dear Madam,
Faithfully yours,
pp. George G. Harrap and Co.

There are many more gems in the papers I received from Chris Orpen. I would be sharing them in the forthcoming issues of this esteemed journal.



Notes and References

1. See Sarada Sarkar, 'Sister Nivedita's Unpublished Letter and Family Papers', *Prabuddha Bharata*, 122/10 (October 2017), 683–705.
2. This is the only indication we get about the date of this piece, which obviously is in 1977.
3. Contrary to what is written in this account, Swami Vivekananda never initiated Sister Nivedita as a nun, but only as a *brahmacharini*.
4. It seems the writer has mistaken 'the white sister' to be the meaning of the word 'Nivedita', which actually means 'the offered'.



Gems of Memories: Reminiscences of Swami Saradhananda

Swami Shuklatmananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

ONE DAY I WAS ABOUT TO BRING MILK for Swami Saradhananda in a flask. On my way I met a doctor and spent some time talking with him. When we were talking, his son suddenly snatched the flask from my hand and dashed it to the ground. Before we could do anything, the flask broke into pieces! I was scared as to what would Saradhananda say. He listened to everything and said: 'What if it is broken? It wouldn't have lasted so long, if it was with anybody else. A sadhu gave it to me. I have been using it for about twenty years. But I feel sorry for your nature. Why are you so restless? You are to become a monk—try to bring a little steadiness into your movements.'

I used to sometimes feel much exasperated with my restless nature. Once I asked him: 'I am very restless, I myself feel this at times. You surely know this better than anybody. Will it never go? Shall I never be calm and quiet? Please bless me so that I may attain real tranquillity of mind.'

He said:

Know that our blessings are always with you. Our lives are all blessings. There are no curses here. Do not doubt this. But the reason I keep correcting you is because of my affection for you. It will not do to just ask for blessings. You



must make yourself a fit receiver. You have to make the efforts to move ahead. Blessings will then help you to progress, encourage you to overcome obstacles and will make you courageous. You are talking about restlessness. It is, to some extent, a characteristic of your age. You have understood your problem of restlessness and also sincerely wish to become calm. This is very good. Try hard and you'll become calm in due course of time. People seldom learn without being knocked about in life. And this is your age to practise restraint.

I spent so many years with Swami Saradhananda but never saw him getting angry with anybody or being in a sulky mood. However, finding him raising his voice in some rare occasions, somewhat puzzled, I once asked him: 'Why do you become furious at times?'

Saradhananda: 'When was that?'

Me: 'Well, the other day when you were excitedly saying something to a person, he became quite nervous.'

Saradeshananda: 'Oh! That was just make-believe. I did it so that he would never make such a mistake in his life. It will get imprinted on his mind. Had I been soft towards him, he would have forgotten it in a day or two.'

This reminds me of another incident. A monk, who enjoyed Saradeshananda's special affection, came to Vrindavan, solely to spend some days in his company. The monk came to Vrindavan earlier also. This time, Saradeshananda asked him to visit at least a few temples, but the monk said: 'This time I have come just to see you. I will not go to any other temple.' When after being repeatedly asked, the monk did not accede, Saradeshananda excitedly told his attendant: 'Turn him out right now! Why has he come here if he doesn't listen to me?' The monk got scared and asked the attendant: 'Brother, Swami Saradeshananda is very angry with me. What do I do now?' The attendant replied: 'Don't worry. Just go to a temple and he will be happy again.' And that proved to be true. When the monk returned after paying a visit to the birth place of Sri Krishna, Saradeshananda talked with him affectionately just as before. Later, in the course of conversation, he told the attendant: 'When you go to a place of pilgrimage and return from there without paying a visit to the deity, it amounts to insulting the presiding deity.' On another occasion when a monk behaved in a similar way, Saradeshananda said: 'Is he an infidel? He has come to Vrindavan and is reluctant to visit any temple! If he doesn't listen to me, ask him not to come to me.'

Sri Nrisimhavallabh Gosvami of Vrindavan was an erudite scholar and a great devotee. He was closely associated with the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama in Vrindavan. It was he who translated *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga* into Hindi.¹⁶ During his last days he was admitted to the hospital of the Sevashrama. I had to go every day to the hospital wing to enquire after

his health and then report the same to Swami Saradeshananda. One day, finding me disinclined to go the hospital for some reason, Saradeshananda said rather wistfully: 'Were I able to walk, I would not have asked you to go to see him. I myself would have gone instead. He is such a learned person!'

Once, down with malaria, I was staying in a room, quite some distance away from Saradeshananda's room. When everybody would be off to work, he would slowly walk to my room, leaning on his walking stick. I was overwhelmed when I saw him in my room the first day.

On the eve of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's *tithi* puja, we were joyously decorating the temple. As the work was coming to a close, I inadvertently knocked over the old *tanpura*, a stringed musical instrument, of the temple and it broke. Much upset and worrying about what the seniors would say, I silently slid away to the terrace and sat there for quite some time. Meanwhile, Saradeshananda sent people around to search for me. Later, taking me to his room, he affectionately patted my back and head and made me eat some delicacies. Then he said: 'Don't worry so much about this. I have enquired and the *tanpura* is alright. It has not broken; it has just splintered a little. Nobody would blame you. The Secretary swami will get it fixed when he goes to Delhi.'

We are often careless when we do small jobs. In this regard, Saradeshananda once said:

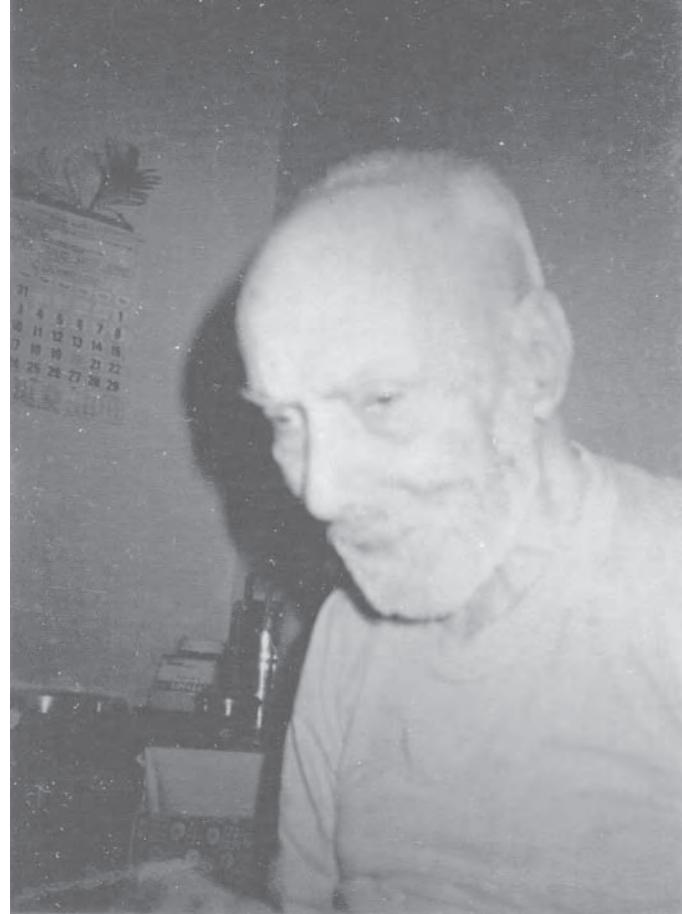
One's character is known through one's performance of small acts. Doing things at one's own sweet will, heedless of the consequences, is nothing short of the onset of insanity! If you don't practise restraint now, you would not be able to do it later. Then you would have no option but to idly spend your days. Neither would you be able to meet those small demands of mind nor would you get peace of mind. All the energy will be dissipated through mental

disagreements with others. The more your spiritual hunger and the less your craving for other things, the more would be your peace of mind.

A devotee, towards whom Saradhananda was much affectionate, was very eager that he be given a privilege to bring something for Saradhananda's use. Remembering the old patched up bowl he used daily for his food, I asked the devotee for a bowl. But when Saradhananda learnt of the incident, he rebuked me out of sheer exasperation: 'Fie on you! Why do you serve me? I've told you repeatedly not to ask anything from the devotees. Be satisfied with what comes on its own. There is nothing like contentment. They have not left yet. Go at once and ask them not to send it.' I rushed to them and told: 'Saradhananda has asked you not to send the bowl. He'll let you know if he needs it.'

It was rather unbearable to him that the monks and devotees, who came to see him, would have to go back without seeing him, not even when he was ill. Sometimes it so happened that the Secretary swami sent some devotees to see Saradhananda, clearly telling them not to talk and prostrate at the doorstep and return. But, Saradhananda would somehow catch sight of them, and would call them inside and talk with them. A devotee used to come regularly and prostrated either from outside or by coming inside the room. Once seeing him coming I drew the curtain hastily. When the devotee went away after prostrating at the doorstep, I let Saradhananda know of this incident. He exclaimed: 'What have you done! Bring him at once! Know for certain that God never forgives wrongs done to his devotees.' I rushed to bring the devotee.

One day when Saradhananda was about to have his meal, a lady doctor of the Sevashrama came to offer her prostrations as she was going home that day. Lest he should know, I silently went out of the room and told her in a low voice



to come later. But the moment I re-entered the room, Saradhananda wanted to know: 'Who was she? Why did she come?' Hearing everything from me, he said: 'Call her now and arrange for her prostration.' When I pointed out that it was his meal time, he said: 'That doesn't matter! She will only prostrate before me and leave.' I brought her inside the room and Saradhananda, who had not started his meal yet, gave her some prasad of Sri Ramakrishna from his own plate. At this her eyes were filled with gratitude.

Once I had a heated argument with one of the monks of the Sevashrama, right in front of Saradhananda. I finally stopped when he expressed reproof. After a while, when my anger subsided, he told me: 'Go and ask him for forgiveness!' I said: 'Why? Where do you see my fault? You know what the argument was all about!' He said: 'That doesn't matter. Above all

you are junior.' He continued: 'You'll not be belittled. harbouring animosity is injurious to both of you.' It was a wonderful experience. It was as if an unbearable burden was lifted from my heart.

Once Saradhananda said: 'Only those can survive, who are of an obliging nature and are satisfied with the minimum that is provided by the ashrama.'

To one of his dear brother-monks, who served him once, he said: 'Pay keen attention to these three—perfect character, regular spiritual practices, and scriptural studies. These three are the pillars of monastic life. As a bird is crippled without any of its two wings and the tail, so is a monk's life, without any of these three. Read the *prasthana traya*, the Bhagavadgita, the Upanishads, and the Brahma Sutra, with the commentary of Acharya Shankara.'

Swami Priyavratananda used to give Saradhananda a massage every day. Saradhananda would feel so relaxed that he would soon fall asleep. When Priyavratananda became the new cashier of the Sevashrama, he came to offer his prostrations before Saradhananda and seek his blessings. Saradhananda blessed him and said: 'Let me tell you one thing: it will come in handy for your work. Maintain an accounts book. When you pay someone, first make the necessary entry in the book and then give the amount. And when receiving money, first take the amount and then write down the entry in the accounts book. If you practise this for the first few days, you will soon get a hang of it. It will be quite helpful while settling the cash balance at the end of day.' Priyavratananda asked him: 'Were you a cashier anywhere?' Saradhananda replied: 'No, I've heard this from an expert cashier.'

Monks and devotees used to send many gifts to Saradhananda. With his permission, I used to distribute them among the monks. One day Saradhananda called me and said: 'Monks and

devotees send me various articles for use. If you require anything, you keep that. Also, if you think something can be of use to me, you can keep that too. You may give the rest to anybody you like and you need not ask my permission for that. Do not clutter the place with things. Things have a way of getting accumulated. At the end, you would find yourself spending your days handling and shifting them.'

Saradhananda used to be so full of humour at times that we would be rolling with laughter. One day he was seated on the edge of his bed, with his feet dangling. I was making him wear socks. When it was done, I placed my head gently on his lap and demanded: 'Bless me!' He placed his hand on my head and suddenly started laughing a lot. I asked him: 'Why are you laughing so much?' He said: 'Do you know the words of my blessing?' After saying this, he was so convulsed with laughter that he could barely speak. I divined that something was the matter and became curious to know it. I asked: 'Please tell me, what your blessing was?' Suppressing his laughter with visible effort, he said: 'I blessed that you would serve me well!'

Once when he came to know that I was suffering from a headache, he said: 'Please massage my knees, you will be alright!' I exclaimed: 'What! My head is aching, and it will be cured if your knees are massaged!' He said: 'Well, just see if it does not get cured! You're sitting idle now. I'm not fooling you. When you will be massaging my knees, your mind will remain occupied and thus it will be off the pain. Besides, serving another has its usual good effect.'

When I was memorising the verses of the Gita, he said: 'What would mere memorisation do? You neither have any prior knowledge of Sanskrit nor is your pronunciation correct. Rather, read a few verses daily with the *anvaya*, splitting the words and arranging them in the

prose order. That will ensure correct pronunciation and would enable you to understand the verses better. If you get habituated to a pronunciation arising out of wrong spellings, you can hardly overcome it. Now, I tell you a verse of the Gita, issued directly from the lips of God. If you can put it into practice, much of your monastic life will be built: '*Trividham narakasyedam dvaram nashanam-atmanah, kamah krodhah tatha lobhas-tastmad-etat-trayam tyajet*; this door of hell, which is the destroyer of the soul, is of three kinds—passion, anger, and also greed. Therefore one should forsake these three.'¹⁷ In other words, the three vices—lust, anger, and greed—are the doors leading to hell and these are verily the root causes of a monk's downfall.

I said: 'It is extremely difficult to know at what point and also how these are activated and by the time we become aware, there remains no other way but to repent. Sometimes, even if we come to recognise their invasion beforehand, such is the power of our *samskaras*, latent tendencies, that we cannot overcome them.'

Saradéshananda said:

It is surely difficult indeed! It is extremely difficult to become a monk. Else, why have you become a sadhu by making your parents cry? If you're sincere, keep on trying. Don't give in even if you stumble a hundred times, just like 'hereditary farmers [who] will continue to cultivate their fields whether they get a crop or not'.¹⁸ Haven't you read that failures are the pillars of



success? Or, is it to remain a mere book learning? It's difficult only because you don't give it a serious thought! You will find in retrospect that you don't do many things that you used to do earlier because you deem it unbecoming of you. You have left your hearth and home because you have vairagya, the spirit of renunciation. Now those things, owing to the sway of past impressions, will sometimes resurface. If you don't make an effort to overcome them and allow yourself to be easily carried away, you'll repent afterwards. Those who have discrimination, feel the prick of their conscience in doing anything wrong. But the problem is that we don't care much about that feeble inner voice. We throw caution to the wind and repent later. But, sometimes it is difficult to decide between the right and the wrong. Hence, holy company and scriptural studies are absolutely necessary.

When two monks came to meet him, he enquired: 'You have tremendous workload. Do you find time to meditate in the mornings and evenings at least?' They replied: 'Sometimes, even that becomes difficult. We don't know what work would come our way on a particular day.'

On hearing this Saradhananda said:

Please do some little spiritual practices before going to bed and while getting up in the morning. No matter where you are, you are sure to retire at the end of the day. I have seen that one can utilise those hours just as one pleases. During the times of heightened activities, especially when one is up against obstacles, I have noticed that one can think of God more intensely. At such times, an intense concentration on him is so rapidly achieved that one does not get it even after prolonged hours of japa at other times. The important thing is to have devotion, faith, and utter dependence on him. The way is sincere wish and intense longing. All the qualities of devotion, faith, and dependence are tested during our work, during the most trying hours of our existence. The question is:

are these qualities increasing or not? Where is it mentioned that his devotees will not suffer? Rather, we find in the scriptures that they are not supposed to be swayed even by excruciating pain: 'Obtaining which one does not think of any other acquisition to be superior to that, and being established in which one is not perturbed even by great sorrow.'¹⁹ And there lies the test! You don't learn unless you're knocked hard.

Harsh reality makes you learn, 'Not I, but Thou', and then comes complete surrender to God. Only then can you say: 'I stand with my doubt removed; I shall follow your instruction' (18.63).

Saradhananda was extremely averse to gossiping about others behind their backs. If the conversation of those gathered in his room were to drift to the criticism of others, no sooner did the words of such criticism reach his ears, than he would instantly intercept: 'Stop that nonsense! I cannot bear it anymore. Either sing devotional songs or read out something to me or if you can't do anything, at least massage my knees.' Much exasperated one day, he came down heavily on me: 'It seems monastic life is not for you! Imperfections will be there in the world, you must overlook them. Know always: "*Dekhi shuni kichu boli na / kono doshe pay na*"; I see and hear, but do not say anything, as a result, no faults touch me.' And moreover, are you entirely faultless that you try to find fault with others? Think how much good it would bring if you just redirect your energies in correcting such tendencies!'

A brahmachari used to often criticise a senior monk in front of Swami Turiyananda. Turiyananda was very fond of that brahmachari. He told him one day: 'You still have a long way to go and your boat is in the middle of Ganga.' Mentioning this incident, Saradhananda said: 'Look at Nalini Maharaj on the other hand! We are staying together for over twenty-five years and never have I heard him criticise anybody.'

Triguna Sen²⁰ used to occasionally visit Swami Saradhananda. He also used to regularly write to Saradhananda. On his visits, he would always sit on the floor, even though Saradhananda would insist on his sitting on a chair. Sometimes he would even continue his conversation with folded hands while standing.

Once during a conversation, he mentioned to Saradhananda about the disorderly state of affairs in the place he was staying then. Saradhananda advised him to stay with his daughters in Kolkata. At this he told that he was afraid of going to Kolkata as people disturbed him too much there. He would be made to discuss all sorts of matters with them. Saradhananda said: 'Why would you be disturbed if they come? Many must be coming with a good motive. And when somebody comes to discuss anything not to your taste, you must make them understand politely that you don't want to talk on those topics. When they gradually come to know of this, they will not disturb you any further. At first it would be surely difficult.'

Triguna Sen said: 'May be I am reading some scriptures or contemplating on God, somebody would turn up then! It is also difficult to stick to a fixed routine.' Saradhananda replied: 'Try to think that they are also being sent by God. Behave with them as if you're serving him. But it is of course better not to break the routine. I suggest that you at least spend the winter with your daughters. Your health is breaking down. How would you continue with your spiritual practices with it? Well, how's your food there?'

Triguna Sen: 'As Sri Ramakrishna brings! There is a Shiva temple. I partake of the temple prasad.'

Saradhananda replied with a genial smile: 'Shiva's prasad is alright, but I say, take Mother's prasad [meaning fish and meat] now! It would be good for your health. And who will look after you there? Your daughters want to serve

you as well. They are like your mother, they will look after you. You should also see them as your mother. I am advising you what I think best. You please think over what I am saying.'

While taking leave of Saradhananda, Sen made his obeisance and said: 'Father, there cannot be any arguments over what you've said. You know where our good lies. I will definitely keep your words.' Later, according to Saradhananda's wish, he stayed with his daughters.

I came to know from their correspondence that the renowned writer Gajendra Mitra was closely associated with Saradhananda. He rewrote Saradhananda's Bengali book *Shri Shri Chaitanya Dev* in the form of a novel entitled *Kantaprem*.

Swami Akunthananda aka Shambhu Maharaj²¹ was very devoted to Saradhananda. He



also had a special affection for me as I was at Saradeshananda's service. Once I asked him: 'Why do you have so much reverence for Saradeshananda?' He replied:

I have met many great sadhus in my life. When I first saw him I felt a great sense of reverence for him and surprisingly it has been growing stronger ever since. I first saw him doing relief work at Sagardvip. We were returning by boat. The boat was moving close to the shore. Swami Nirvanananda was the in-charge. Suddenly Saradeshananda stood up and told: 'I have not been to Sagardvip for many years, I'll get down here.' On Nirvanananda's instructions, the boat was anchored and Saradeshananda got down with a small bag. There was no trace of any human habitation in that place. Nobody could understand how he dared to get off at that place without the slightest worry. He did not seem to have any worry about food or shelter. And the most curious fact was that nobody even protested! I thought about this during the entire journey. Later when I asked Nirvanananda about this, he told me: 'You're surprised because you do not know Saradeshananda.' Ever since then I started feeling a reverential awe towards him. I have sought his company whenever I have got a chance and I still do.

Akunthananda expressed his desire to write his reminiscences of Saradeshananda, once he got rid of his workload. But alas, he passed away so early!

Once Akunthananda told me: 'I have seen eight direct monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and still I respect Saradeshananda. And do you know what? This respect increases every time I met him.'

Saradeshananda was also very fond of Akunthananda. Once Akunthananda, Gahanananda and Atmasthananda came to meet Saradeshananda, who was lying on his bed, while Akunthananda was sitting on a chair in front and the other swamis were sitting on a bed beside. While taking leave, Akunthananda told

Saradeshananda: 'I am in the Ramakrishna Mission since my birth! Now I understand it's not a Mission, it's a "machine", yes, "machine"!' He articulated the last word with an extra stress, as if chewing the word. Without a moment's delay Saradeshananda replied humorously: 'It's evident from the "production" that we see!' Gahanananda and Atmasthananda together said: 'Akunthananda, you better come away now! You have nothing to say after what you have got.' All laughed heartily and took leave.

Saradeshananda once reached Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Patna, when all the inmates were resting. He simply slid through the ashrama gate and had a nice sleep on the temple veranda. When they found that it was Saradeshananda, everyone enquired after his strange behaviour. Saradeshananda said: 'I reached here at an odd hour. I did not want to disturb anybody. I should not be a trouble to an ashrama.' I heard this incident from Akunthananda.

Swami Trivikramananda aka Sudhanshu Maharaj, the erstwhile Secretary of Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindavan used to prostrate before Saradeshananda every time he went to Delhi and returned. Apart from this, he would come once or twice every day to Saradeshananda's room and sit for some time. Each time he would invariably enquire if anything had to be brought for Saradeshananda. If Saradeshananda found us whispering in private, he would cast a suspicious look on both of us and tell Trivikramananda: 'Please don't bring anything from Delhi. I need nothing. It's he who is always asking for this and that.'

Vrindavan has an extreme climate; it's scorching hot in summer and shivering cold in winter. When the Trivikramananda wanted to install an air conditioner in Saradeshananda's room, Saradeshananda told him: 'Don't increase expenditure. I don't need an air conditioner. Rather

make sure the patients get the generator facility when the electric power goes.' Trivikramananda arranged for that soon.

Once, an elaborately ornate chandelier costing several thousands of rupees was installed in the temple of Sri Ramakrishna in the Vrindavan Sevashrama. When I told Saradhananda about this, he indignantly said: 'Don't pay any heed to all the pomp!'

I asked: 'Why has it been put up then?'

At this Saradhananda gravely said: 'These are unavoidable things in temples. You have to overlook them.'

While writing a letter to Swami Swahananda on the occasion of Vijayadashami, Saradhananda told me: 'Write on the top, "Vipadbhanjanayai Durgai Svaha; oblations to Durga, who is the dispeller of dangers".' I inquisitively asked: 'You always write *Sri Durga* or "*Sri Durga Sharana*m; refuge in Sri Durga", so why are you making an exception this time?' He said: '*Vipadbhanjan* is his pre-monastic name, his brahmacharya name was Durgachaitanya, and now he is Swahananda.'

Once Swahananda told him: 'If you give permission, I wish to buy you a denture.' Saradhananda said: 'What shall I do with denture? Nowadays I consume only milk; I hardly eat anything else. And whatever they give me to eat; they make a butter-like paste of it.'

Swahananda said: 'If you put on the denture, your speech will be clearer.' However, Swahananda did not further insist on his buying the denture. Swahananda continued: 'When we hold classes on scriptures in the West and tell the devotees about *jivanmukta*, the state of being liberated even when alive, they want to know if there are any living examples of such a state. We then mention your name. They will be immensely happy if you talk to them a little when they visit this place.'

Saradhananda replied: 'Well, just seeing me would do.' In this connection, I remember a verse of the Bhagavata that I heard from Saradhananda: '*Na hy-am-mayani tirthani na deva mrich-chhila-mayah, te punanty-uru-kalena darshanad-eva sadhavah*; sacred waters alone do not possess purificatory virtues, nor do images of clay and stone alone represent the deities. Whereas these purify a person after one has taken recourse to them and worshipped them for a long time, holy persons purify by their very sight.'²²

It was characteristic of Saradhananda to treat everybody equally. It was only to be seen to be believed how he treated all with equal love and affection. There was no pretension in his behaviour. He would treat the monk who had left the Ramakrishna Order, or who was made to do so for some reason, with the same love and respect as he would treat one who was a regular member of the Order.

Once a monk, who was very close to Saradhananda, left the Order. I requested Saradhananda to write to the Belur Math authorities for him. I had the belief that if Saradhananda intervened, it would be possible to bring that monk back to the Order. However, he said: 'I would have possibly told, but now that time is past. He also did not care for my opinion.' Later, when the monk came to Vrindavan, Saradhananda talked with him lovingly just as before. But when I asked Saradhananda if I could maintain my correspondence with the monk as before, he explained to me: 'You belong to the Order and according to its rules, as one of its brahmacharins you cannot be in contact with any monastic who has left the order. But, of course, if you have genuine love and respect for him, you can always pray to Sri Ramakrishna for his spiritual welfare.'

Sometimes he would taunt me saying: 'Have you yourself left your home to become a monk

or have they, out of exasperation, driven you out of home? I don't see them coming to visit you even once!'

Every morning Saradhananda would draw some amount of water through his nostrils and throw it out of his mouth. It is called *nasa-pan*, drinking through nose. He said: 'It keeps headache at bay.' I do not remember Saradhananda ever suffering from a headache.

If I ever happened to read out to him anything connected with the Holy Mother Sarada Devi, he would sit still and listen. And during that time he would resemble a helpless and restless little boy twitching his eyes comically and a beautiful smile would spread over his face. It would seem that his body was apparently there but his mind had drifted to Jayrambati, to the Holy Mother. Once I asked him: 'Do you feel like going to the Holy Mother at Jayrambati?' His immediate answer was: 'I would have flown there this moment if I had wings!' Again when I said, 'Let's take a few days leave from the Secretary swami and visit Jayrambati. I have not seen the place yet', Saradhananda said, 'You silly boy! I can't move about with this frail body.'

One day he was lying quietly on his bed. I was busy doing something. He suddenly called me. Going near him, when I asked what had happened, he said: 'I went to Belur Math! I met many old acquaintances there.' I asked: 'Were you dreaming?' He said: 'May be, I was.'

I asked him if he possessed anything used by the Holy Mother. He said: 'Yes, I had a few things but I gave these to Belur Math long ago. I had one *japa* beads, but I lost it when I was in Rishikesh. I kept it somewhere and went to the toilet, but forgot to pick it up again. I never found it.'

When he was doing spiritual practices in Rishikesh, one of his dear brother monks was also there for the same purpose. He had his

belongings in a suitcase. Saradhananda arranged a *kutiyā*, a small hut used by monks to stay away from people, for him near the Ganga and told him: 'Take only those things that you really need. Don't keep any money. I'll keep your suitcase. You take it from me when you leave the place.' Saradhananda also arranged for his alms and advised him: 'Sadhus usually jostle for the alms. You should wait at the end of the queue and receive your alms in peace.'

One day one of his attendants told him: 'A devotee keeps requesting me to accept something for your service. Your *chaddar*, upper wrapper, has become quite old. I can ask him for one, if you permit.' Being greatly annoyed, he said: 'I have told you over and again not to ask for anything from the devotees!'

One day Saradhananda was weeding the flowerbed with a garden trowel. Seeing this, Swami Alokananda aka Amulya Maharaj asked him jokingly: 'What are you searching for?' Saradhananda instantly replied: 'What else! I'm searching a cure for insanity!'

I used to keep some things behind Sri Ramakrishna's photo for easy access and whenever I needed them, I would tilt the photo slightly and would take out those things. Observing this for some days, he warned me: 'I make salutations to the photo, knowing that Sri Ramakrishna is verily there. You should not tilt the photo and keep things behind it.'

I was reading a book by Swami Vivekananda. There were still a few pages left for one of the chapters to be completed. Meanwhile, Saradhananda called me a couple of times, but I procrastinated and went only after the chapter was over. Saradhananda said: 'You are reading Swamiji in vain. Here I am suffering badly from pain. I called you repeatedly but you did not listen. What would mere reading do? Is it only for giving sermons to others?'

There used to be a feast on the occasion of Sri Ramakrishna's *tithi* puja at the Vrindavan Sevashrama. Many abbots of other ashramas would also come. A little monetary gift was made to all the monks attending the ceremony. There had been a little unrest among the abbots about the meagre amount they were given. Swami Trivikramananda once asked Saradhananda about it. Saradhananda said: 'Do you think the abbots need anything? Rather you can increase the amount for the ordinary monks and Vaishnavite mendicants.' Trivikramananda increased it for all of them—abbots, monks, and Vaishnavite mendicants alike because the abbots could otherwise feel insulted and would not have attended the celebrations, if their gifts were not increased proportionately.

A devotee from Singapore used to bring various gifts for Saradhananda, when he would visit Vrindavan every year or would send them through someone when he could not come. Saradhananda once said to him: 'See, I don't need these. These things will be distributed among those who need them.'

Among the books written by Saradhananda, two have already been published, *Shri Shri Chaitanya Dev* and *Shri Shri Mayer Smriti Katha*. He wrote another book, *Paigamber Mohammedon* Prophet Mohammed, as books on his life were scarcely available in Bengali, at that time. Apart from these, he wrote some other books also: a translation of the *Vivekachudamani*, which he gave to Swami Abjajananda, the biographies of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda, of about two hundred and fifty pages, *Palash*, a collection of his poems, and his memoirs of Swami Turiyananda, which is untraceable now. His reminiscences of Swami Shivanananda and Swami Saradananda have been published respectively in *Shivananda Smriti Sangrah* and *Glimpses of a Great Soul* by

Swami Aseshananda. A poem, 'Kamarpukur Yatra' which was written in a reply to a set of four poems 'Chari Dham', written by Swami Premeshananda to Saradhananda have been published in the eighty-fifth issue of *Udbodhan*, the Bengali organ of the Ramakrishna Order. He actually wrote four poems, but the rest of them are now lost. His three nice letters about Swami Premeshananda have been published in the first part of *Premeshanandajir Patravali, Go Forward* in English.

Saradhananda cherished an idea of initiating a system of parikrama, circumambulation of places of pilgrimage, for Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, and Belur Math if possible, just as it is in vogue for holy places like Varanasi and Vrindavan.

He said to a devotee: 'It is really good that you have retired from your work. Now you have to work more. So long you have worked for yourself and your family, now you have to work for the world at large, that is, for the family of Sri Ramakrishna. The attitude of work really matters. The world is his and we are his servants. We have to work with this attitude of service.'

'What responsibility do we have, if it is God who gives us the propensities for good and evil?' In reply to this question by a brahmachari, he replied: 'See, my boy, not everyone has the realisation that everything is his will. Who believes this? Practically nobody. How many believe even in God? Only to make our conviction strong, there is the necessity of spiritual austerities, of leading a pure life and of the restraint of the senses.'

Once when a devotee prayed for some advice, he said: 'There are two important things in spiritual life—one is the worship of God and the other is the spirit of altruism. It is not actually altruism, rather, it is service, "service to man is service to God". Wherever you find

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, you find these two things running side by side. One is the service of humanity and the other is the worship of God. All the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna should cast their characters in this mould. Their houses also should resemble this grand ideal. Sri Ramakrishna came to teach these two things.'

When a devotee asked him about the spiritual path that was suitable for businesspeople, as they were preoccupied with the running of their business, Saradhananda said:

What if you manage a business? If one can get God while one is engaged in warfare, then why won't one reach him if he does business? The Lord himself has said in the Gita: 'Think of me at all times and fight.'²³ If not always, at least remember him in the beginning of work and at the end. Who wants him sincerely? We merely say that we want him. If we are eager for his vision, we can feel his presence even while doing work. Make it a habit to read the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* before going to bed, no matter how late you are. Even reading a page will do.'

Saradhananda advised many to read the *Gospel*, especially before going to bed.

Saradhananda's brother Naresh Chandra Chakraborty had become old. Once he sent a letter to Trivikramananda, asking for Saradhananda's opinions about the service of the family deity Rajarajeshvara, which was getting neglected due to his advanced age. When Trivikramananda asked Saradhananda about his opinion, he said: 'Ever since I left my home to become a monk, I ceased to have any opinion about such issues, nor do I have any right to pass opinions on such matters.' We were amazed at his strong spirit of renunciation.

Later our Trivikramananda asked him: 'Maharaj, just tell me this. What should be the

duty of a householder in this situation? I assure you that I shall not write your opinion to him.' Then Saradhananda said: 'In situations like this, householders can make necessary arrangements for regular services of the deity and hand over the idol to a monastery or temple, if they are willing to take it. If they are left with no other options, after doing special worship and asking for forgiveness, they can immerse the deity in water.'

(To be continued)

References

16. See Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna-Lil-aprasanga*, trans. Sri Nrisimhavallabh Gosvami, 3 vols (Nagpur: Ramakrishna Math, 1986).
17. Gita, 16.21.
18. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 659.
19. Gita, 6.22.
20. Triguna Sen (1905–98) was the Union Minister for education in the Government of India. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1965. He was the vice chancellor of Jadavpur University and Banaras Hindu University. He was a member of the Rajya Sabha from 1967 to 1974.
21. In his pre-monastic life, Swami Akunthananda (1913–97) was the grandson of Balaram Bose, the eminent lay disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. He was the son of Balaram Bose's daughter Krishnamayi. He was given spiritual initiation by Swami Akhandananda in 1933 and he joined the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission at Belur Math in 1939 and was ordained into sannyasa by Swami Virajananda in 1948. He participated in relief operations and served Swami Shankarananda. He was the head of the Ramakrishna Society at Rangoon for four years and the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Golpark, Kolkata, for three years. He was a legal expert. He passed away at the Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, Kolkata on 21.2.1997 at the age of eighty-four.
22. Bhagavata, 10.48.31.
23. Gita, 8.7.



Portrait of Sister Nivedita Displayed at Bose Institute Museum, Darjeeling

Saga of Epic Proportions

Swami Sandarshananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

THUS SHE APPRISED Bull of the intensity and commitment with which Bose was pursuing his scientific activity, pulling her along. This frightful busyness, needless to say, was a matter of deep satisfaction to Nivedita as it would become him, a scientist of the highest attainment and global reputation, of which she was so proud, having her sense of belonging to him like a beloved mother. She quoted a portion of his discussion in the letter which struck her important to be told Bull. ‘I think that just like the curves in magnesium and other things, so a man should be able to pierce to the deepest depth and rise to the highest height unrestrained anywhere in his course. One should go through one’s life, bounding backwards and forwards from experience to experience, unfettered unstayed—anywhere. This would indeed be freedom.’⁴¹ Nivedita was truly amazed to listen this from his lips. That he was a humanist *per se* must have caught her imagination at that moment. Hence, her following comment was: ‘I am afraid I almost gasped. It was so like seeing Swami’ (ibid.). The remark is significant because it lets one to find why she was so fond of Bose. The sterling qualities that make man a saintly person were in Bose’s character by which she was overwhelmed, even not hesitating to see his resemblance with Swamiji in some way by their virtue.

Unlike many high browed scientists, Jagadish Chandra Bose was a believer. He was a staunch Brahmo but grew liberal by and by. As he was not on the denial mode for religion ever, it must have had a good effect over Swamiji as well as Nivedita. Maybe because of which he could win their hearts from the outset easily. They pinned hope in his extraordinary ability and he, similarly, proved himself outstandingly productive in the cause of reviving Indian science, earning India a highly

respectable position in the world. Nivedita’s maternal vigilance over his mental condition and work paid off as expected. Her letter to Miss Macleod on the Christmas Day of 1900 reveals she was in a state of perpetual worry if Bose’s entry to Swamiji’s orbit and service would happen really. She was sure of the fact that Bose respected Swamiji. But her doubt was still raising its ugly head for Bose’s Brahmo beliefs which were diametrically opposite to Swamiji’s on certain important issues. She began the letter telling about Bose’s operation and the care he was being provided with after the operation by her and others, as well as about how restless he was getting to return to work. Bose underwent operation on 12 December and since then they ‘have been in constant attendance on him’ (1.405). She wrote: ‘He is doing splendidly, I think, and we all hope that he will get up far stronger and better than he was before he became ill. He is chafing for work like an operated-upon tiger’ (ibid.). There was a bit of self-analysis in it.

I wish I could tell you half that I have been learning—many of these things that I cannot tell—but that I trust I have really learnt—things to make one gentler and tenderer and more reverent to every one always. And here, at each step, I have been appropriating some knowledge of yours. But alas, not yet do I know how to tune my soul to another soul and get into harmonious relation with every moment! More reverence—more—more—more—to human nature—how much one needs that! (ibid.).

Many things were coming to her mind. She was turning the pages of the diary that she had kept during her voyage with Swamiji. Memory of the bitter experience trying to act as a link between the Brahmos and Swamiji was disturbing her, and that suspicion about Bose. She proceeded:

I have been spending this afternoon with Dr. Bose—and quite naturally I fell to reading bits of the diary that I kept on the voyage. Oh Yum—I have no desire to be ‘a link’—(Swami’s old horror—and quite rightly!) but if this man [Bose] is not sweeping into his [Swamiji’s] circle and his service, India’s future is not what I think it is. He owns he can never do anything by halves. Till now—work has been his religion—and what a religion! But the monastic ideal has never dawned on him and the notion of symbolism has been fenced about with its negations. Are these things about to change? I do not know. But with what wonderful attention reverence and attention he listens to Swami’s great charges! And they *were* great. I can never be thankful enough for that 6 weeks [of voyage with Swamiji]. This Hindu gratitude is exquisite. ‘We know to whom we owe it’ he says quite simply, when we talk of our friendships and the Work. And the ‘Whom’ is my Father [Swamiji] (1.406).

The letter carries a mixed feeling that depicts her deep sentiment which thus become of her. Both Swamiji and Bose were her dearly own. They exerted the maximum influence on her conscience. But the complexity they weave in her thought is uniquely absorbing to read and reflect upon.

Following this letter, she wrote another letter to Miss Macleod demonstrating such peculiarity of her mind. It is laden with her sentiments with Bose, Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji expressly, from three different angles of her perception knitted into a single piece of work of self-analysis. Letters of this type she wrote hardly to anybody else than Miss Macleod, for it was in Macleod alone she reposed faith to the optimum, believing that she only had the ability to plumbing her delicate feelings with regard to those three and not to be casual about the nuances of her notions.

She discovered an able interpreter of the

Brahmo religion in Bose when he was staying at her parental home in Wimbledon, after being released from the hospital. There is no denying the fact that Bose vouched for his own religious faith with authenticity—his knowledge about it was commendable and he knew how to offer it intelligently. As a token of his honest allegiance, he celebrated the Seventy Second Anniversary of Brahmo Samaj in his house with devotion in the course of his stay in London later. Its news was published in the Brahmo journal. It said that Dr Bose attended the Paris exhibition commissioned by the Indian Government and carried out scientific investigations at the Royal Institutions and was residing with Mrs Bose at Ealing. It was reported that the anniversary celebrations took place at their house, which was attended by about twenty Brahmos who are studying in London or at Cambridge and a few English guests. Some other details of the function were also reported.

The letter in view was of the 4 January 1901, ten days after the last. She said in it that she was profoundly impressed by the Brahmo ideas as presented by Bose before her. She thought it was necessary for her to receive, for which she had indeed an explanation. She wrote:

I am trying to get the whole of the Brahmo feeling and tradition honestly. And it seems a right and necessary side to get. There has been a tremendous resolution on his side to overcome—for he felt that honour could never permit my hearing his views from him. But at last I think I am getting it all. And I am throwing myself into it completely, as I think S. R. K. [Sri Ramakrishna] would wish me to do, and trying, if that might be, to reach GOD that way. You will remember that we (or at least I) did not love even Shiva and Kali at first. Even S. R. K. cannot have loved all religions equally. So I may say without any disloyalty to the effort I am making that at present it is dreadfully like the Puritanism of my childhood. But I feel strongly that



Jagadish Chandra Bose in 1907

the more this is the fact, the more must I try to do it. And sometimes I am quite clear and sure that the call and the effort come straight from S. R. K. Himself. And at other times I think of Swami and shudder—for I do not think *he* could understand or approve—and to be disapproved of by him is still the uttermost depth to me. Moreover, I seem to be casting away all that I have lived for—all that it has been Freedom to possess—so far. But how mean even to think in such a way! As if it were so dreadful to see one's own miserable little self in the *wrong!* No wonder one is so shy of seeing it hungry or cold or ridiculed! (1.415).

Even though she is seen here to be taken over by the Brahmo 'way', she never does away with her attachment with Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji. The former inspired her to throw herself into it completely, and the latter held an invisible rein in his hand, as it were, not to let her go astray, like a true guru and Father. One therefore takes almost no time to realise that this was

a figment of her imagination for a moment—one does not find her pursue it. To do away with Hinduism—remaining committed to India and Swamiji—could never happen in her case, for she had assimilated its timeless spiritual values in such a manner that they were not to go away from her being ever, whatever might come to her mind occasionally though. Her heart dwelt in India, even if she was physically away. She wrote in the letter: 'As far as *wishes* go—my whole soul is in India. I am more and more convinced that there is nothing to be done outside. And what I am doing here seems the nearest fancy-work' (1.414). One is incidentally reminded of Sarada Devi's comment about her at this point. Mother said: 'How much devotion she has for Naren [Swamiji]! Because he was born in this country, she has left her home and family and come to do his work with her heart and soul. What devotion to the guru! And what love for this country!'⁴² On a different occasion, expressing her belief, she said to the Mother similarly: 'Mother, we were Hindus in our previous births. We are born in the West so that the Master's (Ramakrishna's) message may spread there' (220).

Nivedita was eager to have a job for Jagadish Chandra in the West, and her role to get one for him in England was significant. Before that and after his operation she rebuilt his confidence and inspired him to start his work with the same zeal as before. She was pleased to see that her effort came to use. Within a week on 11 January she gave its message to Miss Macleod in another letter.

Tomorrow will be a month since the day of operation—when Dr. Bose lay down on the table and said 'Now Gentleman you may cut away!' And he has done 3 days' laboratory work this week, doing an enormous amount in the time! Isn't it splendid? The Indian blood has vindicated itself this time and everyone says that only his abstemious habits could possibly account

for so quick a recovery. The risks he ran seem also to have been greater than we knew at the time. So thank heaven—and still more S. R. K. [Sri Ramakrishna] and the King [Swamiji], as my private superstition declares—for the fact that we are well through.⁴³

This is again a letter rich in thoughts regarding her attitude towards religion and spirituality, having Swamiji at the center. Her link with Swamiji was inextricable. It brought about a metamorphosis, transforming the very core of her existence on earth. No other chemistry was available which might change and restructure her psyche anymore. It was super saturated with the ancient Hindu ideals which sustained India vibrantly through the ravages of time for millennia. Which is why, while writing, spilling over from her mind in an irresistible flow were Shiva, Kali, Krishna, Buddha, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, and countless more, who appeared to her as synonymous with India. Little foibles came and went, making no dent on her as such.

Before the memorable lecture at the Royal Institute, Bose was working in the laboratory with tremendous enthusiasm, making discoveries and instruments, regarding which Nivedita said, 'It is breathless awe with which one watches' (1.424). Saying thus in her letter to Macleod on 15 March, she thought it was due to Divine Mother's grace, for which she had certainly prayed in earnest while Bose was seriously ill and inert. She couldn't, as it were, hold her astonishment observing his quick recovery and return to the laboratory with that strength and vigour. Giving utterance to her joy, she then said, 'How can the Mother pour out Her spirit so abundantly?' (1.424–5). Even in the next letter dated 22 March, she again said to Macleod with the same sense of exhilaration: 'You never saw anything like Dr. Bose's work. It is just pouring discovery' (1.426).

Nivedita was, obviously, under great tension before Bose's lecture at the Royal Institute, which was held on 10 May 1901. She wrote a long letter with its details to Rabindranath Tagore immediately after the lecture was being done. Though the letter is not available its content is, more or less, now known since Tagore used it in an article on Bose. Giving an elaborate description of the excellent manner and body language of Bose, Tagore had quoted the concluding portion of Bose's lecture. Bose's final words were:

I have shown you this evening the autographic records of the history of stress and strain in both the living and non-living. How similar are the two sets of writings, so similar indeed that you cannot tell them one from the other! They show you the waxing and waning pulsations of life—the climax due to stimulants, the gradual decline of fatigue, the rapid setting in of death-rigor from the toxic effect of poison.

It was when I came on this mute witness of life and saw an all-pervading unity that binds together all things—the mote that thrills on ripples of light, the teeming light on earth and the radiant suns that shine on it—it was then for the first time I understood the message proclaimed by my ancestors on the banks of the Ganges thirty centuries ago—'They who behold the One, in all the changing manifoldness of the universe, unto them belong eternal truth, unto none else, unto none else.'⁴⁴

One finds a resonance between Bose's above remark and Swamiji's study of science and religion. In the paper on Hinduism Swamiji said:

Science is nothing but the finding of unity. As soon as science would reach perfect unity, it would stop from further progress, because it would reach the goal. Thus Chemistry could not progress farther when it would discover one element out of which all others could be made. Physics would stop when it would be able to fulfil its services in discovering one energy of

which all the others are but manifestations, and the science of religion becomes perfect when it would discover Him who is the one life in a universe of death, Him who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world. One who is the only Soul of which all souls are but delusive manifestations. Thus is it, through multiplicity and duality, that the ultimate unity is reached. Religion can go no farther. This is the goal of all science.

All science is bound to come to this conclusion in the long run. Manifestation, and not creation, is the word of science today, and the Hindu is only glad that what he has been cherishing in his bosom for ages is going to be taught in more forcible language, and with further light from the latest conclusions of science.⁴⁵

It is amazing to observe that Swamiji presented the paper in 1893, seven years before Bose presented his, yet both so much resemble in their ideas despite their religious positions being poles apart. As has been seen earlier, Swamiji's clairvoyant mind saw Bose already belonging to him is hereby established in disguise. Like Swamiji, Bose was also consciously propagating the ultimate truth discovered by the sages of India and upheld India's supremacy in the domain of knowledge and wisdom.

The response to Bose's lecture was overwhelming. On the other hand, a handful of physiologists, as has been already mentioned, got upset by his success. When Bose was being harassed by them Tagore came forward to his aid seriously. He sought financial assistance for Bose from the king of Tripura. He was then constantly in touch with Bose. All that he did was because Nivedita was continuously writing him for such action. But there is no denying the fact that Tagore's role in this respect was great and had created impact. That Nivedita was behind his initiative is learnt from her letter to Miss Macleod on 19 July 1901. She wrote:

Dr. Bose's work is being attacked enough to make us think it the best thing yet done, in its own line. The physiologists are so upset that they are just like sparrows—now dismayed at his results—now restored to spirit again because Burch of Oxford says he has repeated an experiment and found the result due to uncertainty of contact. Not daring to tell him the remark of Burch—but utterly relieved by his letter to them all!—using their influence meanwhile to have our poor Hindu sent back straightway to Calcutta. Never mind! India won't be downed that way! Without saying anything to him, I have written to Mr. Tagore to ask, cannot some Hindu prince undertake the cost of him and his work?

Would it not be heavenly, to have a *Native* Government take up a scientific work which the British were not large-minded enough to protect?

I need not tell you that he himself had publicly pointed out the possibility that Burch so gloats over, and had devised new experiments to meet the case, but Burch has not attempted these experiments.⁴⁶

As a faithful facilitator of Indian science Nivedita was annoyed to the core and was in tortuous pain within when she noticed Bose was being deliberately cheated and obstructed at every turn of his scientific work. Her courage and compassion took a legendary height gradually for a greater battle. Her consecutive letters to Tagore were a real document of her enormous exasperations and expectations, among which specially stands out the one that of the 18 April 1903. It illustrates her total identification with the cause of India in a soul stirring language and sentiment. She gave a detail description of Bose's works and achievements in various fields of science since 1894 and had also mentioned the challenges and difficulties he faced alongside. Approaching the end of this long letter she wrote:

The book on Response in Living and Non-Living is now triumphant. I want a far greater work, such as only this Indian man of science is capable of writing, on Molecular Physics—a book in which that same great Indian mind that surveyed all human knowledge in the era of the Upanishads and pronounced it One, shall again survey the vast accumulations of physical phenomena which the 19th Century has observed and collected, and demonstrated to the empirical, machine-worshipping, gold-seeking mind of the West that these also are One—appearing as Many.

But I recognise that under present conditions one cannot even ask for the beginning of such a work. The petty daily persecution where perfect sympathy and every facility are absolutely necessary: the distracting routine of a paid servant who is never allowed to feel independent of daily bread, the constant difficulties thrown in the way by minor officials who have power enough to impede, but not enough to be raised above jealousy—are these things not enough? And then we ask him to undertake great work—but what are *we* willing to do for *him*? Can we supply him with companions in learning who will stimulate and encourage the arduous work? Does it trouble us that he is the one man in India doing work of the first rank, and that to this day he is paid less than *any* Englishman, even the commonest, would receive in his place? (2.558–9).

In an exuberance of enthusiasm and in a surfeit of energy, when Bose progressed fast in his discoveries and instruments he was bogged down in the uncertainty of his future and traumatised him unnecessarily. In a situation like that Nivedita's emotion ran high, like a mother wounded by the distress of her child. Nivedita accordingly burst out in agony at the conclusion of the letter thus: 'Ah India! India! Can you not give enough freedom to one of the greatest of your sons to enable him—not to sit at ease, but—to go out and fight your battles

where the fire is hottest and the labour most intense, and the contest raging thickest? If you cannot do this—if you cannot even bless your own child and send him out equipped, then—is it worthwhile that the doom should be averted, and the hand of ruin stayed, from this unhappy and so-beloved land?' (2.559). After speaking her mind in this manner she remarked finally to finish the letter: 'This is all very inadequate, dear Mr. Tagore. But I have used many sheets of note-paper I see—and I must draw my letter to a close' (*ibid.*). She wrote to Rabindranath because he wanted to know everything about Bose, whose intimacy with Tagore grew over informal letters. Nivedita, presumably, wanted to inspire Tagore to come out in a much bigger way being her partner in her crusade against British conspiracy to mitigate and block Bose's endeavours.

The fund of correspondence between Bose and Tagore during Bose's trying time is a tale of his sufferings right from the horse's mouth. Being in jeopardy, Bose sought Tagore's advice. He himself was also looking for a way out from his financial problem and the hostile atmosphere he had to work in. Tagore respected his candour and confidence in him. He offered Bose as much moral and material support as he could afford. A facile and frequent communication with Nivedita at that point eventually had a sobering effect on him. As a result, he realised that Bose was left in the lurch and required assistance urgently.

But it keeps one wondering when one comes across the precision with which Nivedita relates Bose's activities in a summary to Tagore. This is evidently a clean example of her illustrious ingenuity that she could with an ease delve into advanced scientific matters to such extent in such a short while of her coming in contact with Bose, although her area of interest for from her

early stage was altogether different. Giving the overview of the entire gamut of Bose's divergent work, she wrote in the beginning to Tagore in the same letter of 18 April 1903:

If one could also realise, in a country situated as India is, the sacrifices that a free people, like the Americans or English, the French or the Germans would be willing to make in order to obtain such a worker as Dr. Bose—of their own blood—one would stand amazed, as I did, at the spectacle of a great scientific man working alone as he was. I had come, of course, from Europe, where Prof. Bose's name was well known as the discoverer of the Etheric Waves that penetrate minerals. His work was belated in reaching Europe. It was announced along with the Rontgen Rays, and obviously went deeper—since that form of light was deterred by bone and metal, while *his* penetrated these substances. Already, early in the year 1895, I believe, he had demonstrated the existence of these invisible rays at the Town Hall, Calcutta—and it was not till two years after he had thus made the essential discovery—as some of the Italian Scientific paper were the first to point out—that Marconi began to work out and apply on the large scale.

Of course you understand that men of the inventor and discoverer type—men like Marconi, Tesla, Mascine, and so on—rank in the world of science far below the investigator, the man of Sannyasin mind like Dr. Bose, who pursues knowledge for its own sake. Even Prof.—jeopardises his great reputation, and certainly minimises historic importance by taking patents and becoming involved in commercial schemes. But Dr. Bose not only demonstrated the existence of these particular etheric waves, he proved himself as great in constructive ability as in research itself, and his instrument popularly known as the Artificial Eye, was considered a marvel of compactness and simplicity. Prince Kropotkin was talking of how Prof. Thomson the week before at the Royal Institution had exhibited an apparatus some yards long to act as a polariser of light—and

Prof. Bose, the following week to do the same thing, simply took up a book (it happened to be a Bradshaw) and showed how the rays would pass one way and not the other. 'I said to myself' said Prince K, 'that this was the simplicity of the highest genius.' But of course Prof. Bose was only able to perform this great simplification of methods because *his* THEORY was so much more sound than those of his English and German competitors in the field (2.556).

Earlier, in 1901 Nivedita had substantial discussions regarding Bose with the well-known Indian economist Romesh Chandra Dutt, who told her that 'in his opinion the time has come when Dr. Bose should be released from his chains' (1.442). Dutt gave her an idea of the kind of financial assistance Bose would need 'in order to continue and complete his work' (*ibid.*). Therefore, writing to Mrs Bull on 23 July 1901 she said:

Anyway it [the money needed] has to be begged secretly in India. And I am to help in the beginning. ... Mr. Dutt can send me to people from whom he could not well ask himself. He has already written to Mr. Tagore, in consultation with Mrs. Bose. But he thinks Mr. Tagore will feel helpless.

Mr. Dutt realises all the ideal side of it too—how much good it would do the nation to *do* this—how it would make the new science one with the old, and so on (1.443).

Physicists fascinated and physiologists dismayed, Bose was amidst a peculiar situation casting a long shadow over the future of publishing his papers due to be published from the Royal Institute. When it happened actually so he was determined to bring out his research matters in a book, which Nivedita thought was correct thing to do and assisted him in his new venture tirelessly all through 1901, delaying her return to India from the West. Besides, Nivedita wrote

articles on Bose in various papers and journals, using even pseudonyms, and one of those journals being ‘Review of Reviews’ of England. In her lectures also she highlighted Bose’s contribution to Indian science. She started from Paris on 9 January 1902 and reached Madras on 3rd February. Her co-traveller on this journey was Romesh Chandra Datta. Speaking at the Mahajan Society in Madras, she discussed Bose’s work at length. Coming to Calcutta, she delivered a lecture at the Classic Theatre Hall on 21 March 1902. The title of this lecture was ‘The Hindu Mind in Modern Science’. She spoke on it basically to apprise the audience of Bose’s work and its importance in terms of national regeneration. After the demise of Swamiji she went round India speaking about Swamiji’s life and teachings. Whenever occasion arose in the course of this trip she didn’t miss to bring Bose’s work to the public attention. Thus, in Bombay she addressed the students and told them about the famous discoveries of Bose.

Scenario drastically changed for Nivedita with the sudden death of Swamiji. She dissociated herself from the Ramakrishna Mission voluntarily and determined to fulfil her Master’s mission alone, as she had understood it. Swamiji said it is better to wear out rather than rust out. She showed by her life how to do it having recourse to a noble cause with absolute devotion like a perfect karma-yogi, being in step with Swamiji’s teaching. In its wake she was out with her full right and might, temporal as well as spiritual, which ultimately cost her precious life. India was the deity identical with the image of her Master permanently installed in her heart. Her idea received an approval from Sarada Devi herself. Relating this to Miss Macleod she told: ‘Oh by the way, the Mother says that Sri R. K. [Ramakrishna] told her that Swamiji was even as I have loved to think him, a direct incarnation

of National GOD, and He Himself of Kali—do you see?’ (1.87). Like Swamiji, for social progress and development, she gave the maximum stress on the spread of education. She said:

We want more educative, more friendly, socio-religious point of view, surely. The attitude of imperial races seems to be one loud vulgar clamour of self-interest, computed in disgusting terms, of a dividend on capital. Exploitation of man, of earth, of future, of everything—one glorious blaze of £10000 a year for a generation or a century, and squalor and degradation for thousands of years after—and all for what? For hours of gossip in suburban drawing-rooms, and the joys of variety theatres in the Strand! That is, after all what our civilisation subserves’ (2.1221).

One may observe comparing how her diction here resembles Swamiji’s to the same context, when writing to someone in confidence. The crooked British policy to curb education in India disturbed her the most. She was frightfully active to root it out from the soil of this country and revive education in the national line for a natural and sustainable growth of the people in all directions.

She was deeply anguished by what the British Government was unjustly doing with an ulterior motive. She believed ‘what a people do not do for themselves is ill done, no matter how brilliant it seems.’ ‘That which is Indian for India, I touch the feet of, however stupid and futile,’ she told with a view to regenerating self-respect among Indians. Showing her indebtedness to this country she said: ‘Blessed India! How infinitely much I owe her. Have I anything worth having that I do not directly or indirectly owe to Her?’ (1.423) Sister Nivedita took up the cudgels for his legitimate right and intrepidly gave J C Bose every moral as well as practical support with a sense of her mission for India. She was convinced ‘Swami [Vivekananda] is the only person’ she knew of



Swami Swarupananda

'who goes to the root of the matter' (1.436).

India's weal and woes were, therefore, her own weal and woes, in which her one occupation was to be with the Boses as their prop and protector constantly, since it meant to her so much to serve India and love India by that.

She knew that she was not to live long: according to her own estimation she was not likely to see forty-five, outliving her Master only by five years. She survived roughly nine years after Swamiji's passing away, breathing her last on 13 October 1911 at the Boses' in Darjeeling. Nivedita's is a saga of epic proportions. It is still to be completed, bringing out all her tales to light. The gigantic effort and acumen required to do so are hard to come by. But then, the works of Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu in Bengali deserve ample appreciation for some pioneering works

he has done in this regard. His four-volume biographical research on her and two-volume collection of her letters in original are a cornucopia of information, events, and occurrences linked to Swamiji and India. Even then, there's yet much about her to surface from the abyss of oblivion. Like science, she relentlessly drew from the infinite Indian resources of literature, art, architecture, philosophy, religion, and culture in order to counter the Western attempts to denigrate India, adopting her Master's method of facing the 'brute' squarely.

Conclusion

The purpose of this piece of writing is not to present an exhaustive account of Nivedita's activities connected to the Boses. It aims at showing the kind of distinctive character that Nivedita was really, featuring a few of her striking aspects. And one striking aspect which excelled was her unique capacity for plumbing Swamiji's personality. Once she portrayed Swamiji in a very few words thus:

It is too much to expect both a great brain and a great heart. It is a rare combination. Of course the Swami had it, but that was Swamiji. There was none beside Him. Then, too, I have found out since that Sw. Swarupananda knew only one phase of the Swami's character. They [Swarupananda and others] either talked about science or Advaita—the Absolute. He never saw Him in the child-like mood, in the playful mood, in the tender mood, in the inspired mood, in the mood when He showed His great heart, in the poetic mood, or in the mood when you saw the King of the Rishis (2.1278).

She then clarified why her brother disciple Swami Swarupananda missed the other luminous facets of Swamiji's character, saying: 'He [Swarupananda] has told me several times lately that he never saw the Swami I speak of, that the Swami never showed those sides to him.

He was at the Math only a month or two when S. [Swamiji] was there' (*ibid.*). Swami Swarupananda became acquainted with Swamiji after his return from his first visit to the West and was most of the time away from him. He was sent to the Himalayas to be with Mrs Sevier at Mayavati. The crystal clear perception that Nivedita had about Swamiji's character was due to the maximum time and touch of Swamiji she had enjoyed, as Swamiji himself had expressly said, mentioned here before.

The revolution that occurred in her mind as a result of Swamiji's death had led her to lend a primacy to the work of national regeneration. She now deemed this task most urgent since she found in it laid Swamiji's vital wish. Consequently, she forthwith became busy with the political affairs of the country, picking up relationships with the national leaders. Even then, her concern for Bose's work was alive and conspicuously active. She tried a political course to help him, using Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who was then a member of the Viceroy's Council. Her letters to Gokhale in this respect are indeed valuable for its understanding. For instance, she once wrote to him:

India has now had some degree of modern education for 50 years. She has a right therefore to participate in the scientific movement of the world. The fact that she is fully capable of doing so is abundantly proved. The only [question] is what will the Government undertake, to secure to her the further opportunities she needs? And here it may be said that high scientific inquiry—the personal interest of the worker in particular lines of investigation, and the intellectual passion necessary to pursue these—is not a thing which can be imported, or produced mechanically, merely by organising for and expecting them. It is not given to mortals to command these higher gifts. All that can ever be done, by individuals or by Governments, is to take

advantage of them and foster them, whether they spontaneously occur.

The work already done by my countryman Dr. J. C. Bose is before the world. Yet this is only the beginning of an investigation that can with difficulty be finished in his life-time. The Government has in the past expressed its appreciation of his services in this field. But would it not be sound policy, resounding as nothing else could to the honour of the rulers, to make that appreciation fully effective? Is it not time to place in his hands the responsibility for the organisation of higher research in a great centre, as already recommended indeed by prominent scientific men in England—or, failing this, would it not be the least that could be done to utilize his gifts and enthusiasm to the utmost, making it his special duty to devote his whole time to the furtherance of discoveries which he has already made, and is likely to add to in the future?

It must be pointed out here that even the establishment of technical school would be no adequate reply to the demand of the country for scientific opportunity: for second hand information is apt to fall out of date, and is never life-giving. Unless a people have established amongst them the spirit of science, the habit of original thought, and the ability to advance human knowledge itself, their very applications of [other] people's scientific discoveries will become increasingly inefficient (2.839–40).

Gokhale was now parleying with the British Government. It was incumbent on him that he tried to take India's interests forward. For that there was a need for him to understand first India's difficulties in depth. Nivedita, therefore, thrashed out the idea of the importance of scientific studies and Bose's utility in them. She advised and inspired Gokhale variously in order to win arguments in India's favour.

On the other hand, how valuable Nivedita was to Bose is discernable from the fact that he

had expressly said to Jean Herbert—who wrote a biography of Nivedita in collaboration with Miss Lizelle Reymond first—that it was Nivedita's unwavering faith in Indian science which 'led' him to establish his 'Bose Institute'. In that letter dated 7 October 1937 Bose wrote: 'Sister Nivedita was ... greatly interested in the revival of all intellectual advances made by India and it was her strong belief in the advance of Modern Science accomplished by Indian men of Science that led me to found my Research Institute.'⁴⁷

The extraordinary edge that Nivedita gave to National Movement resorting to Swamiji's message pierced open the subterfuge in the name of doing good to India by the British Government. In its quest, she exposed the oppressing and exploitative stance it had taken to in its hub before the world. There was not a single vital issue of national importance in India which she could be said to have left untouched. She gave powerful thrust to each and every contentious aspect that involved India's legitimate claim to crush the British blocked against it. Sadly, this essential chapter of Indian National Movement has not been dealt with so far officially.

Along with that, she carried on with the work of other books and papers by Bose. The immensity of this work alone lets one see what she was capable of. In ten years, working for Bose's first four books and papers, she produced 2500 pages and 1000 diagrams in print. Besides, there were her own writings, school, lecture tours, social work, and numerous other things in which she was deeply engaged. Among them, the most significant one was organising the Freedom Struggle, in its both overt and covert forms, inducing displeasures and apprehensions in the British Government. She was satisfied when she observed many young people of the country were inspired by Swamiji's teachings and offering themselves to the political emancipation

of their motherland. She happily noticed that they were continuously coming to receive Sarada Devi's blessing. On 1 September 1909 she wrote, 'And everyone says now that the Swamiji was the source of the new ideas and they [freedom fighters] come to touch the feet of the Holy Mother [Sarada Devi]' (2.999–1000). In this regard she spoke to Sarada Devi also, about which she had placed on record in another letter. 'Such a change has come over the country. All call themselves disciples of Swamiji. ... The other day I said to the Holy Mother, "The time is very near that was promised by S. R. K. [Sri Ramakrishna] when you should have too many children. The whole of India is yours!" She answered, "I am seeing it!"' (1.995). Sri Ramakrishna once told Sarada she needn't be unhappy for not having seen any child of her womb, for a day was to come when she would have countless children. Drawing reference to it, Nivedita told that to her. The entire nation was then soaked in a patriotic spirit infused by Swamiji's patriotic message. Swamiji looked upon Sarada Devi as non-different from his Master Sri Ramakrishna. Those who knew this were eager to visit Sarada Devi, and their number was swelling day by day. Nivedita said to Miss Macleod previously: 'Dear Yum, *Swamiji's Life was His work*, and a wonderful work it was. Come again someday and let us live together in its shadow for a while. It is not only *having seen* that matters, but also *keeping* what we have seen' (1.826). She kept Swamiji alive every moment of her life after Swamiji cast off his mortal frame. Whatever she said and did exuded Swamiji alone because she was suffused with Swamiji's ideas to such an extent that there was no other way to her for behaving differently. God's power, shakti, found Nivedita a suitable conduit to express itself while she was absorbed to serve India with absolute unselfishness and purity of mind. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain where she

got such enormous courage and energy from, in order to vanquish her invincible adversaries, and thereby do so much for India in such a small period of 17 years or so only.

Nivedita considered herself fabulously fortunate to have been able to achieve a God-realised Master and an orbit of spiritual giants such as His brother disciples, his own disciples and, above all, the Holy Mother Sarada Devi. She knew that her destiny was decided for certain once she had come in contact with Swamiji, and that she would work out her karma rest of her life in India alone. So, she tread the path of karma yoga she was trained in by Swamiji and served India by her intellect and spirit, as her sadhana to accomplish her Divine goal.

She accordingly watched and discovered in Sarada Devi how the ideal of karma yoga to be in intense rest in the midst of intense activity was practically demonstrated in its consummation in the guise of an ordinary woman. She had always coveted to attain a state akin to the state in which the Holy Mother resided effortlessly, even while performing her thousand and one worldly duties. On 22 September 1910 she wrote to Mr and Mrs Ratcliffe:

Oh dear, Oh dear! How one is slipping back into this awful belief in *life*! If I ever go to prison for a prolonged period, none of my friends need grieve about it—for I shall immediately take to meditation and try to climb those wonderful heights on which the Holy Mother [Sarada Devi] lives. Such sweetness and serenity as hers, with such *depth* of experience and affection, are past all imagining. And how wonderful her life is—she lives in the midst of an elaborate system of worship spontaneously organised and maintained by others, for the adoration of her own Husband, whom she worships as GOD, but cherishes a deep human tenderness for nevertheless. ‘I loved simply to look at Him!’ I heard her say the other night! And living so, she seems

more and more like a drop of water on a lotus leaf—touching the world at all points, yet undiverted by it—undeluded—filled with beatitude. She is of course an abbess but so child-like and sweet nevertheless, and with such a rigorous standard about marriage! Sometimes it is almost amusing to see how *impossible* it is to her to condone the desertion of a husband by a wife—and this, regardless of the treatment meted out, by the lord and master. She simply doesn’t seem to regard that branch of criticism as her province.

But always that Hindu ideal of the perfect wife! Oh how *perfect* she is—and how deeply and wonderfully to be loved! (1.1151-2).

Nivedita’s work was the work of attrition. Nature exacted pounds from her flesh rapidly for what she aggressively did to uplift the people of India. It was a blood-dysentery which was eating into her physique and bringing her to her last to snuff her life out abruptly.

For a couple of years before it actually came, the question of death was off and on sneaking around Nivedita’s mind. But, the lessons she had learnt from her Master about death fortified her over the years to reckon with it. When she saw it approaching she remembered Swamiji. ‘Oh what sweet memories crowd upon one, for these last 13 years! How wonderfully full and deep is the wave that overwhelms the soul at twilight! “Beyond life and death” as Swamiji always insisted. He was never contented to say either word alone. One has need of realizing that these days—for death is taking so many so many of those one has known and loved’ (1.1230). She wrote these only five weeks before her passing away. Starting from Swamiji himself, one by one, so many of her dear ones died. Swami Yogananda, Swami Ramakrishnananda, Gopaler-ma, Swami Swarupananda, Swami Sadananda, her mother, Swamiji’s mother, Mrs Bull, and a host of others died before her eyes.

With them she had such a close bonding. Their departures made her understand in a deeper way of Swamiji's saying sannyasa means love of death, and see clearly the inalienable kinship of death with life. One month or so earlier to this she wrote to Mr S K Ratcliffe—formerly editor, *The Statesman*—on 28 July 1911: 'But I have a great love of the shadow of death you know. It is so terrible to foresee. Yet so beautiful when one stands within it—so much more real than this fretfulness called Life! And yet, dear Friend, may you not come there! How long one would save you, if one could, from touching the hem of the Garment of the Angel Azrael!' (1.1217).

While death was knocking at her door her thought was thus soaring freely on its facile wings. Freedom she sought in all conditions. That Swamiji gave her in her life and work, as well as in her death. For, she never for a moment saw Swamiji away from her as long as she was breathing, as if waiting to take her by the hand to the other shore of Death. Which is why, she slowly whispered while passing away in an audible tone: 'The frail boat is sinking, but I shall yet see the sunrise.'⁴⁸

Because her 'frail boat' made of blood and flesh duly sank, she was given the Eternal Life of light and joy in her heavenly abode by her affectionate Master as a doting Father to His dear spiritual daughter. Both being extremely dear to her had left a dent on Miss Macleod by their untimely deaths in tandem. Their exceptionalities side by side suddenly struck her now when they were no more. She said with all humility and respect that Nivedita stands at the head of women just as Swamiji stands at the head of men. Her observation about them was in a way correct, considering the manner in which she studied them from proximity.

Sarada Devi was perfectly knowledgeable

about Nivedita's girls' school in North Calcutta from its very inception. She performed a puja of Sri Ramakrishna herself to inaugurate the school auspiciously. She gave all support and protection to Nivedita for her work of women education she had thus started at the behest of Swamiji. Affectionately remembering Nivedita after her demise, The Holy Mother said:

Look at Nivedita, a Western girl who came to our country and worked happily, forbearing insults and harassment; and also enduring so much discomfort. She tried to educate our children. When she visited some homes to register their children for her school, she was humiliated; some did not allow her to go inside their homes; and some allowed her to go inside but later purified the place by sprinkling Ganges water. She saw everything but did not mind. She left each place with a smiling face. There was no bounden necessity for her to educate the girls of our country by enduring such insults and ill-treatment and ruining her life little by little. You see my daughter Nivedita had such a wonderful mind that she took on the responsibility of teaching our girls on her own shoulders because her guru Naren [Swami Vivekananda] wanted it and asked her to do it. She did not care for physical suffering and discomfort, or for the insults and incivility of our people. Those for whom she dedicated her life, they treated her contemptuously. Under such circumstances, could the women of our country sacrifice to such a great extent for the sake of their guru? They would say, 'We don't care!' So I say that except for the Master [Sri Ramakrishna] no one knows or understands how, when, what, or through whom makes one work.⁴⁹

Functioning like a patron, Mother sometimes came forward and stood beside Nivedita at the time of her difficulties. She saw with astounding grit and gumption Nivedita served India notwithstanding insurmountable challenges and

predicaments. She upheld her as an outstanding example whenever occasion arose. And perhaps her simple but real assessment of Nivedita's contribution is the best one could do for her struggle and work in India.

Avidly going through Nivedita's life and works, one may finally realise that, consequent upon her separation from the Ramakrishna Order, she became truly global and closer to the followers of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, whether monks or householders. Footloose and fancy-free, she could apply her originality to the full in order to make her Master's precepts efficacious. Swamiji never wanted her life to be constricted. He wanted her to stay free and give her best to the world. Nivedita felt indebted and responsible for the faith Swamiji placed in her. Her loyalty to Ramakrishna and Vivekananda remained intact and firm ever and anon. Sending its signal across—especially to those who conceived her according to their whims—she put her signature deliberately as 'Nivedita of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda' everywhere. The world is yet to see another like her whose sacrifice was so complete, novel, and trans-national and bereft of the slightest trace of selfish motive, as well as bereft of any racial pride or supercilious prejudice. The spot on which her funeral rites were performed was raised a memorial which bore the epitaph as mark of regards: 'Here Reposes Sister Nivedita Who Gave Her All To India.'⁵⁰



References

41. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, ed. Sankari Prasad Basu, 2 vols (Calcutta: Nababharat, 1982), 1.403–4.
42. Swami Chetanananda, *Sri Sarada Devi and Her Divine Play* (St Louis: Vedanta Society of St Louis, 2015), 219.
43. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, 1.416.
44. Rabindranath Tagore, 'Acharya Jagadisher



Jayavarta' in *Chitiprasanga*, 19 vols (Shantiniketan: Visvabharati, 2002), 6.154.

45. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 1.14–5.
46. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, 1.437–8.
47. Sankari Prasad Basu, 'Nivedita and Jagadishchandra' in *Nivedita Commemoration Volume*, ed. Amiya Kumar Majumdar (Calcutta: Vivekananda Janmotsava Samiti, 1968), 301.
48. See *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, 2.1252; Pravrajika Atmaprana, *Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1999), 293; Lizelle Reymond, *The Dedicated* (Madras: Samata Books, 1985), 373.
49. *Sri Sarada Devi and Her Divine Play*, 224.
50. *Sister Nivedita*, 294.

BALABODHA

Ancient Wisdom Made Easy

Dhyana

DHYANA IS THE COMMONLY used Sanskrit word that means meditation. Meditation is increasingly seen as an important practice, both by the religious and non-religious. Therefore, it is necessary to know the detailed meaning of this word. This is a Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word 'dhyana' can be derived from the root words *dhi* and *yana*. *Dhi* means to perceive, think, reflect, wish, or desire. *Yana* means path, course, journey, travel, going, moving, riding, marching, vehicle, carriage, wagon, vessel, or ship. Formed by the words *dhi* and *yana*, dhyana would mean a process, path, or vehicle to properly think or reflect. The word 'dhyana' can also be derived from the root *dhyai*, which means to think, imagine, contemplate, meditate, recollect, call to mind, and brood. Then the word 'dhyana' would mean to meditate or contemplate.

Dhyana is the seventh stage of the *ashtanga*, eight-limbed yoga system of Patanjali. This stage is the penultimate stage and is just before samadhi. Dhyana is a much deeper term and has a very profound meaning than the word 'meditation'. Before practising dhyana, one has to have established oneself in the previous six steps of *yama*, ethics; *niyama*, self-restraint; *asana*, body posture; *pranayama*, control of the vital breath; *pratyahara*, control of the senses; and *dharana*, sustained concentration. *Yama* means to abstain from violence, untruth, stealing, sensuality, and

hoarding. *Niyama* means to practise purity, contentment, austerity, study of scriptures, and surrendering to a higher principle. 'Asana' means proper body posture and 'pranayama' means the control of breath. *Dharana* refers to the fixing of concentration so that all similar mental modifications on an object are confined to a particular place in the mind. In other words, *dharana* is one-pointed concentration on an object.

Dharana is usually not continuous and has interruptions. When by the constant practice of *dharana*, the mind gets easily focussed on the object of concentration, and such a focus becomes continuous, in an unbroken flow, just as the flow of oil from one vessel to another, it turns into dhyana. In yoga philosophy, dhyana is not connected with the object of meditation, but is a state of calmness of the mind. Such a state can be achieved by following the six-limbed process mentioned above. Dhyana is a state of mind akin to a state when there is only a single idea in the mind.

The aim of practising dhyana is to become free of the *samskaras*, latent tendencies, in one's mind. Dhyana removes one's awareness from all other things and makes it one with the object of meditation. In deep dhyana, one is then aware of only one's own self and merges with the object of meditation, that is, the self and the object of meditation become one. Dhyana could be also likened to stilling the mind, much like the stilling of a pool of water. What remains in dhyana is only a clear awareness of oneself. All other tendencies disappear in this state.



TRADITIONAL TALES

A Scene from the Ramayana

VALI WAS KILLED BY SRI RAMA. Seeing this, the shocked monkeys ran to Tara in Kishkindha and wailed before her: ‘O Mother! Vali, the king of the monkeys, has been killed on the battlefield. Please save prince Angada and the ministers. We shall protect the city. Please make Angada the king.’

Tara fainted on hearing the news of Vali’s death. Regaining consciousness, she started beating her head and chest. ‘I don’t need Angada, the kingdom, the city, or money. I have to meet my husband this minute. And so, I will commit suicide!’ Saying thus, she ran with tearful eyes. She reached the place where her husband’s body was lying. Her hair in disarray, an embodiment of sorrow, she saw Vali’s body, soaked in dirt and blood. She cried, ‘O my Lord’, and fell at Vali’s feet and cried in pain.

Tara’s cry could have melted a stone. Then, in that sorrowful state she chanced to see Sri Rama, and told him: ‘O Rama! Please kill me with the same arrow by which you killed Vali. Then, I will be able to attain my beloved husband. He will also be eagerly waiting for my arrival because without me, he can’t have peace even in heaven.

‘O Lord! You too are experiencing the grief of separation from your wife and know well the

sorrow that separation brings. And so, please send me also to Vali’s abode. By doing so, you also would attain merit!’

Then she looked at Sugriva and said: ‘Sri Rama has given you the kingdom. May you happily live with your wife Ruma without any obstacles!’

Sri Rama compassionately gave the following advice to Tara: ‘O lady! There is no need for you to sorrow so much over your husband. Why do you worry about him so much? Think deeply and tell me whether your husband lives in this lifeless body. If you think that this body is your husband, remember that it is made up of five elements. It is made up of skin, flesh, blood, bones, and the like. Time, action, and properties make this body. Does not such a body remain here on earth? Why are you crying in vain? If you think that life alone is your husband, then you should not worry because the Atman is also formless. It does not take birth. It does not die. It does not exist forever in a form as people think. It does not come. It does not go. It is all-pervading. It is not male, female, or eunuch, who cannot be called male or female. It is unparalleled. It is stainless like the sky. It is permanent. It is the embodiment of knowledge. Then why should one worry about it?’



Hearing this Tara said: ‘O Sri Rama! If the body is inert like a log of firewood and if the Atman is ever-existing, why do happiness and suffering occur? Please tell me this!’

Sri Rama replied: ‘The *jiva*, not having the knowledge of Atman or non-Atman and associated with the five sense organs and the ideas of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, experiences happiness and misery. This universe gives a false appearance to the Atman. One cannot know the Truth without self-realisation. Though a worldly person sees various things in one’s dreams, none of them are real. Ignorance has no beginning or end. Though this universe is false, it appears as real because of attachment with the ego, and it flourishes in likes and dislikes.

‘O lady! The mind is the universe. Mind is bondage. It is because the Atman gets associated with this mind that it gets entangled in happiness and suffering. Just as a colourless crystal takes the colour of its nearby objects, the Atman appears to have become one with the universe because of its association with the intellect and the five sense organs. The Atman associates with the mind as a male or a female, and experiences the consequent sense pleasures, gets bound by the properties of likes and dislikes, and ignorant of one’s action, keeps on revolving in the wheel of transmigration.

‘First, it creates the mental properties of likes and dislikes and then it performs various actions. These actions are spiritual practices like *japa* and meditation, Vedic rituals and sacrifices involving the killing of life forms, and evil actions like the consumption of liquor. The *jiva*’s status depends on these actions. Thus, the *jiva*, bound by its actions, keeps on coming and going till the dissolution of this universe. Even during dissolution, when all elements become one, the *jiva* could be immersed in unending ignorance, because of its association with its actions and experiences. On the resuming of creation, the *jiva* appears with the mind as the result of actions performed in previous

lifetimes. When the *jiva* attains good fortune and associates with my devotees or with a saint of a calm mind, then it is attracted to me. As a result, it would want to listen to my story. Such a state is very rare. By listening to my story, one easily attains the knowledge of my true nature. And then, one receives the blessings of a good guru and knows the great truths like “*Tat tvam asi*; you are that”. By one’s self-realisation, the *jiva* knows my nature, which is absolute bliss, absolute knowledge, and absolute existence. And it knows the unparalleled Atman that is separate from the body, the sense organs, the mind, the vital breath, the ego, and the like. Thus the *jiva* attains liberation instantly.

‘Hence, O lady, I have explained to you a great and rare truth. One who meditates on this supreme truth day and night would not be touched by any kind of worldly suffering. Therefore, you too understand my message with a pure mind. By doing so, you would be free from all worldly sufferings. You would not have any worries and you would be free from worldly attachment.

‘O Tara! In a previous lifetime you were my devotee. That is why I appeared before you to give you liberation. You meditate on me and study my teachings day and night. As a result of that, you would not be affected by any action that you perform!’

Hearing this message of Sri Rama, Tara was greatly surprised and her ignorance disappeared. She gave up her sorrow and saluted Sri Rama and obtaining his blessings, instantly attained *jivan-mukti*, liberation even while living. She was liberated the moment she met Sri Rama and all her sins were destroyed.

Listening to these truths, Sugriva got great mental clarity, to whom Sri Rama told: ‘Sugriva! Make Angada perform the last rites of your elder brother’ Accordingly, Vali’s body was decorated with flowers, kept in a beautiful hearse, and his final rites were performed with state honour. ☸

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



What is A People?

Alain Badiou, Pierre Bourdieu,
Judith Butler, Georges Didi-
Huberman, Sadri Khiari, and
Jacques Rancière
Trans. Jody Gladding

Columbia University Press, 61 West
62 Street, New York, NY 10023, USA.
www.cup.columbia.edu. 2016. \$24. 176
pp. HB. ISBN 9780231168762.

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) locates the singularity of secrecy as the ontology of becoming *a people* in his *Literature in Secret*: ‘Forgive me for preferring the secret that binds me to you rather than the secret that binds me to the other other [sic], to each and every other, for a secret love binds me to the one as to the other, and to mine.’ (Derrida, Jacques, *The Gift of Death, Second Edition and Literature in Secret*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 126).

The anthology under review attempts to make explicit this Derridean singularity of *the secret*: ‘The best historians are those who contribute most effectively to lifting the lid—the lid of the repression, of the *Unterdrückung*, of the peoples’ (Georges Didi-Huberman, 74). Mechanisms of repression act both in people and in individuals. The contributors to this anthology of essays enact the liberation of *peoples* trapped in ‘capitalism’s workshops’ (Alain Badiou, 23) through ‘depoliticization’ effecting ‘exclusion’ (Kevin Olson, 111) from *the secret* quoted at the beginning of this review.

Every contributor to this volume rightly extols Karl Marx, ‘that great prophet of the future of the classes’ (Alain Badiou, 23) without whom both contemporary philosophy and theology cannot be practised since Louis Althusser’s (1918–90) *epistemological break* has occurred. Dismissal of Karl Marx, that is, *hauntology*, post this *epistemological break* proves that historians have sold out

to archive-fever, that is, as Didi-Huberman shows (70); historians can no longer interpret dreams. Huberman is quoting Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) here. On a reductionist and thus, comprehensible level—the need for comprehension is characteristic of both Nietzsche’s *last men* and overmen; oligarchs are probably Nietzsche’s *last men*—the essayists in this anthology effectively reinstate the primacy of Karl Marx’s theories as that *one* hermeneutic which alone can resist *commodity fetish* and restore humanity to Covenant Love or *hesed*. Scholars who ignore the redeeming powers of Marx and Sigmund Freud do so at the cost of annihilating their own scholarship.

Returning to Derrida; Derrida’s reading of *Genesis* is the touchstone for any discussion of *a people* post the *epistemological break*. As an aside, Derrida’s reading of *Genesis* is the most powerful reading, and not deconstruction, of that text till date; even exegetes like Walter Brueggemann (b. 1933) cannot match up to Derrida’s gloss. Abraham, Isaac, and God form the triad of secrecy mentioned above and *a people of the Covenant*, as against *the people of a Covenant*. Jacques Rancière says:

Because ‘the people’ does not exist. What exist are diverse or even antagonistic figures of the people, figures constructed by privileging certain modes of assembling, certain distinctive traits, certain capacities or incapacities: an ethnic people defined by the community of land or blood; a vigilant herding people by good pastureland; a democratic people putting to use the skills of those who have no particular skills; an ignorant people that the oligarchs keep at a distance; and so on ... ignorant masses impressed by the resonant words of the ‘agitators’ and led to extreme violence by the circulation of uncontrolled rumors and contagious fears (102–3).

The people, as against *a people*, can therefore be consciously misconstrued ‘as a kind of

"imagined sovereignty", one that combines ideas of collectivity and normative force' (Kevin Olson, 108). This book is a collection of what Bruno Bosteels in his 'Introduction' terms 'interventions' (1). Bosteels contextualises our interventionists:

Faced with the legacy of Heidegger's undeniable political compromises, thinkers such as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy call for an interruption of the general logic according to which philosophy would be able to lead the way to the resolute appropriation of an authentic destiny, whether by a solitary individual or a historic people. (19).

It is within this *rendering inoperative* of all philosophy that we must situate the six interventions.

To *re-operate* philosophy, the interventionists mention Hannah Arendt (1906–75) five times in this anthology. For instance, George Didi-Huberman refers to Arendt thus:

Hannah Arendt said that we will never manage to think about the political dimension as long as we stubbornly persist in speaking of man (65).

Notice that Huberman refers to *The Divine Irreference of Images* though Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007) is mentioned nowhere in this book. Yet Baudrillard's understanding of images is tautology in all the *interventions*. For instance, Pierre Bourdieu says: 'The spontaneous sociolinguistics that agents put to work to anticipate the reactions of others and to impose the representation that they want to give of themselves would permit, among other things, an understanding of a good part of what, in linguistic practice, is the object or the product of conscious intervention, individual or collective, spontaneous or institutionalized' (36). Notice how Bourdieu weaves *representationality* with 'linguistic practice'. This discussion leads to the notion of the popular within language, and by implication, within society, Bourdieu continues:

The notion of 'popular language' is one of the products of the application of the dualist taxonomies that structure the social world according to categories of high and low ('low' language), delicate or coarse (coarse words) or crude (crude jokes), distinguished or vulgar, rare or common, formal or casual, in short, categories of culture and nature ... These are the mythical categories that introduce a

distinct cleavage in the continuum of kinds of speech, ignoring, for example, all the overlapping between the casual speech of the dominant speakers ... and the strained speech of the dominated speakers ... and especially the extreme diversity in the kinds of speech that are universally consigned to the negative category of 'popular language' (37).

These dyads which are Leibniz's monads, lead to 'colonial and capitalist modernit[ies]' (Sadri Khiari, 88). It is worth noting that for those without adequate employment and housing, modernity has not begun, leave alone postmodernity or even cosmopolitanism. Aijaz Ahmad (b. 1932) discusses this conundrum in a different context in his 1998 essay, 'Literary Theory and "Third World Literature": Some Contexts' (See 'Literary Theory and "Third World Literature": Some Contexts' in Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), 43–72).

This reviewer believes that the poor in Africa, South America, and Asia are in a pre-European Renaissance state of being; which is to say quoting Jacques Rancière: the poor are freely circulating capital, 'a population of workers who can always be sent back home' (104), from the First World to their Third World nations. This book is slow but rewarding reading since it invites us to miss the march of this retreating world and hunt for 'the wildest beauty in the world' (See Wilfred Owen, *Strange Meeting*). This beauty lies in the joy of annihilating 'sterile offices', to use Jacques Rancière's term (103), where coders/executives/businessmen/traditional intelligentsia do 'tamper' with capital (See W H Auden, *In Memory of W B Yeats*). These new denizens ensure that capital flows to their coffers fuelling a real crisis in the virtual world where resistance to theory is the norm; theorising is trotted as Marxist. This anthology performs its cultural work by attacking the *tel quel* of the 'gaunt and great, the famed for conversation' (See W H Auden, *The Quest*). At the end of the book one returns to the specters of Marx, thirsting for more from these *interventionists*.

Subhashis Chattopadhyay

Psychoanalyst

Assistant Professor of English
Narasinha Dutt College, Howrah

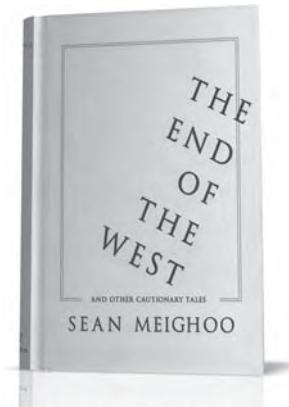
MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.
Extracts from a thought-provoking book every month.**

The End of The West And Other Cautionary Tales

Sean Meighoo

Columbia University Press, 61 West 62 Street, New York, NY 10023. USA. 2016. xvii + 257 pp. \$35.00. HB. ISBN 9780231176729.



A NEW ETHNOCENTRISM has recently become prevalent in certain intellectual quarters. But what is most striking about this new ethnocentrism is that it is presented as a critique of ethnocentrism. Over the course of the past century, the entire Western tradition has been subjected to a radical interrogation within continental philosophy. It has been claimed that underlying the search for truth that occupies all Western thought, from the ancient Greeks to modern European thinkers, is a profound ethnocentrism, an essentially Western ethnocentrism by which the culturally specific problem of truth is given universal significance. The end of an era—or to use both Martin Heidegger's and Jacques Derrida's term of preference, the end of an 'epoch'—has thus been declared. What is really at stake in the end of philosophy, the end of history, and even the end of 'man' is the end of the West itself. Twentieth-century continental philosophy has been marked, then, by the turn from a historical teleology of the West to what I would call a 'negative teleology'—that is, by the turn from a discourse that celebrates the historical and technological progress of the West to a counterdiscourse that laments its cultural and spiritual decline. More recently still, over the past few decades, this negative teleology has been reappropriated within postcolonial theory. Insofar as postcolonial theory endorses the

radical critique of Western ethnocentrism that has been formulated within continental philosophy, it continues to rely on a teleological concept of the West, even if this concept now operates in a 'negative' mode. The end of the West has thus become a fundamental precept of continental philosophy and postcolonial theory alike.

In this book, I want to argue that this radical critique of Western ethnocentrism presumes another form of ethnocentrism—more subtle, perhaps, but all the more persistent. For what this critique presumes is that there is a 'West' to begin with. This Western tradition is ostensibly constituted by a continuous line of thought extending from the ancient Greeks to modern European thinkers, a tradition that has remained impervious to all non-Western traditions. What I would suggest instead is that this Western tradition has been punctured by innumerable points of contact with other intellectual traditions as well as by innumerable points of rupture within. In other words, there is no 'West', at least not in the sense in which it has been conceived as an altogether unique and distinctly privileged event or course of events within world history. Of course, this is also to say that there is no 'East' or any other tradition in which we might situate ourselves completely outside the West, as it were. Neither East nor West can furnish the theoretical precepts for the critique of ethnocentrism that so

many continental philosophers and postcolonial theorists have recently attempted to offer. It is in a double sense, then, that I have titled this book *The End of the West and Other Cautionary Tales*. In one sense, I want to extend the radical critique of Western ethnocentrism that has been so forcefully articulated within twentieth-century continental philosophy and postcolonial theory. But in another sense, I also want to question the intrinsically teleological concept of the West on which this very critique is premised. For if this declaration on the end of the West is to provide an effective critique of ethnocentrism, then it can no longer serve the purpose of establishing a new beginning for the concept of the West itself.

This book is divided into four parts, containing a total of six chapters in addition to this introduction and a short conclusion. In part I, I present my own declaration of sorts on the end of the West. Rather than simply announcing the end of Western ethnocentrism, I argue that the very concept of the West must be dismantled. In chapter 1, I attend critically to what has become known as ‘the *Black Athena* debate,’ an intellectual controversy that was initially sparked by the publication of the first volume of Martin Bernal’s multivolume work *Black Athena*. Bernal proposes not only that ancient Greek civilization was profoundly indebted to ancient Egyptian and Phoenician civilization but also that the modern theory of the Hellenic origins of Western civilization was itself an invention of nineteenth-century European scholarship—a theory, moreover, to which even the ancient Greeks did not subscribe. Following the appearance of the second volume of *Black Athena*, the collected volume *Black Athena Revisited* was published, comprising twenty essays in which Bernal’s work was sharply criticized for its allegedly poor scholarship and ideological agenda. A number of related publications have since appeared, including

Bernal’s response to his critics, *Black Athena Writes Back*, as well as the third and last volume of *Black Athena*. In this chapter of my book, however, I do not attempt to contribute any historical evidence to Bernal’s case but instead to discern what is at stake in this ongoing debate. I argue that the significance of Bernal’s *Black Athena* lies not so much in its deconstructive effects on the very idea of historical or cultural origins or ‘roots.’ I suggest that the *Black Athena* debate concerns not only the concept of the West but also the concept of the origin. It is only by dismantling the origin of the West, then, that my own argument on the end of the West averts the establishment of yet another beginning.

In part II, I introduce my argument on the turn from teleology to negative teleology in twentieth-century continental philosophy. I suggest that the discourses of teleology and negative teleology are fully complicit with each other insofar as they both rely on the intrinsically teleological concept of the West even if the Western tradition is generally denigrated in the discourse of negative teleology. In chapter 2, I trace the turn from teleology to negative teleology in a close reading of some key texts by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, marking what I consider the first articulation of negative teleology in continental philosophy. In chapter 3, I trace this turn again in a close reading of some key texts by Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, marking what I consider the most powerful reiteration of negative teleology in continental philosophy. Read together, these two chapters thus call into question not only the radical inversion of teleology into negative teleology but also the intellectual progress that is widely assumed to have been made in continental philosophy from Husserl’s and Heidegger’s phenomenological investigations to Levinas’s and Derrida’s ethical interventions.



REPORTS

Celebration of the 150th

Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita

Barasat centre conducted a youths' convention on 26 December 2016 which was attended by 560 people. **Bengaluru** centre held a programme comprising speeches and cultural events on 26 November. Besides, prizes were distributed to the winners of the cultural competitions the centre had conducted earlier for students. In all, about 2,900 people attended the programme. **Chennai Math** conducted a short story competition in which 700 people took part. Prizes were distributed to the winners on 20 December. **Dhaka (Bangladesh)** centre held a programme comprising special worship, two public meetings and cultural events, on 23 December which was attended by about 1,000 people. An art competition for children was also held. **Kankurgachhi Math** conducted a seminar on 20 November which was attended by 510 people. **Mymensingh (Bangladesh)** centre held a public meeting on 23 December which was attended by about 100 people. **Port Blair** centre conducted a self-improvement programme on 3 December in which 450 girls and teachers from different educational institutions took part. **Puri Mission Ashrama** held a written quiz competition in which 150 students participated. The Ashrama also conducted a youths' convention on 25 December which was attended by about 400 students. **Purulia Vidyapith** held speeches, a parade and PT show by the students of the Vidyapith, and cultural programmes on 8 and 28 November. A devotees' convention was also conducted on 11 December which was attended by 473 people. **Rahara** centre, in association with the Indian Council of Historical Research, New

Delhi, conducted a national level seminar on 'Sister Nivedita and her contribution to India—a historical perspective' on 9 and 10 December. Sri Tathagata Roy, Governor of Tripura, Mr Brian McElduff, Ireland Ambassador to India, and many other dignitaries addressed the audience. About 1,000 people took part in the seminar. **Sarisha** centre held a public meeting on 25 December which was attended by 205 devotees. **Swamiji's Ancestral House** held two lectures at the centre on 28 November and 14 December which were attended altogether by 1,050 people. On the centre's initiative, seven public meetings were held in and around Kolkata from 27 November to 17 December. In all, about 3,100 people attended the meetings. **Thiruvananthapuram** centre held a lecture series on Sister Nivedita from 21 to 24 September. The centre also conducted a programme on 28 October in which some distinguished people spoke. It was attended by about 200 people. **Vadodara** centre conducted a youths' convention on 25 December in which 150 youths took part. **Varanasi Home of Service** held a music programme on 25 December which was attended by 250 people.

Values Education and Youth Programmes

Delhi centre held a values education programme on 29 and 30 November in which 160 school teachers were trained.

On 23 December, **Kanpur** centre conducted a seminar on values in teaching profession in which about 250 principals, teachers, and teacher-trainees took part.

Vadodara centre conducted a programme on 7 December in Gandhinagar which was attended by 150 students.

News of Branch Centres

A student of **Katihar** school secured the gold medal at the state level weightlifting competition conducted by Art, Culture, and Youth Department, Government of Bihar, at Sitamarihi on 7 and 8 September. Another student of Katihar school stood first at the state level in a painting competition conducted by the Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA), Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India. He also participated in the national level competition held at Delhi on 23 December and was awarded a certificate of achievement and a wristwatch.

The Telegraph Education Foundation presented the Award for Excellence in Academics to **Narendrapur Vidyalaya** in a function held in Kolkata on 26 November. Also, twenty-one students of class 11 of Narendrapur Vidyalaya who participated in the Junior Scholarship Test, 2016, conducted by Jagadish Bose National Science Talent Search, Kolkata, were awarded junior scholarship and 10 others received junior encouragement award. Besides, the school won the Best School Award for the excellent performance of its students in the competition.

Blind Boys' Academy of **Narendrapur** centre won the National Award for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, 2016, for its comprehensive services to persons with disabilities. The braille press of the Academy also won the same award for its work in the field of empowerment of persons with disabilities. Sri Pranab Mukherjee, then President of India, handed over the awards, comprising certificates and a total sum of three lakh rupees, in a function held at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, on 3 December, International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Indian Adult Education Association, New Delhi, awarded Nehru Literacy Award, 2014, to Lokasiksha Parishad of **Narendrapur Ashrama**

for its contribution to adult literacy. Sri Ram Naik, Governor of Uttar Pradesh, handed over the award, comprising a plaque and 21,000 rupees in a function held at Lucknow on 5 December 2016.

Relief

Flood Relief: Bihar: **Chapra** centre distributed 5,811 saris, 5,227 dhotis, 1,000 blankets, and 960 jackets among 7,771 flood-affected families in 37 villages of Chapra district from 1 October to 5 December.

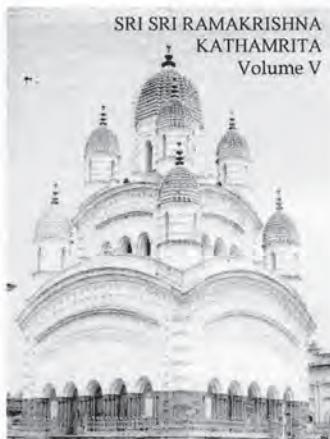
Cyclone Relief: Tamil Nadu: In the wake of the devastating Cyclone Vardha, **Chennai Students' Home** distributed 300 kg rice, 20 kg dal, 20 kg red beans, 20 kg tamarind, 12 kg assorted spices, 20 kg salt, 20 kg edible oil, 40 kg sugar, 20 mats, 200 kg various vegetables, and 20 tarpaulin sheets among 20 poor tribal families in Kallur village in Thiruvallur district on 15 December.

Fire Relief: Arunachal Pradesh: Following an accidental fire in the nearby Ngomdir village, **Aalo** centre provided medical assistance to 57 affected patients on 21 January.

Drought Rehabilitation: Telangana: Hyderabad centre installed a reverse osmosis plant at Antappaguda village in Ranga Reddy district to provide safe drinking water to the villagers. The plant was inaugurated on 22 January. **West Bengal: Saradapitha** centre installed two arsenic and iron removal plants in Panderpara and Gangnapur villages in Nadia district on 21 March 2016 and 5 January 2017.

Flood Rehabilitation: Tamil Nadu: Continuing its rehabilitation work in the flood-ravaged Kallur village in Thiruvallur district, **Chennai Students' Home** distributed 12 fishing boats, 48 fishing-nets, and 17 tarpaulin sheets among 17 poor tribal families on 11 and 25 January. Further, 25 saris, 20 lungis, and 26 children's garments were distributed on 25 January.





JUST RELEASED

VOLUME V
of
**Sri Sri Ramakrishna
Kathamrita**

in English

HINDI SECTION

- Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita** Vol. I to V Rs. 500 per set (plus postage Rs. 100)

M. (Mahendra Nath Gupta), a son of the Lord and disciple, elaborated his diaries in five parts of 'Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita' in Bengali that were first published by Kathamrita Bhawan, Calcutta in the years 1902, 1905, 1908, 1910 and 1932 respectively. This series is a verbatim translation in Hindi of the same.

- Sri Ma Darshan** Vol. I to XVI Rs. 825 per set (plus postage Rs. 150)

In this series of sixteen volumes Swami Nityatmananda brings the reader in close touch with the life and teachings of the Ramakrishna family: Thakur, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, M., Swami Shivananda, Swami Abhedananda and others. The series brings forth elucidation of the Upanishads, the Gita, the Bible, the Holy Quran and other scriptures, by M., in accordance with Sri Ramakrishna's line of thought. This work is a commentary on the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna by Gospel's author himself.

ENGLISH SECTION

- Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita** Vol. I to V Rs. 750.00 per set (plus postage Rs. 15)
- M., the Apostle & the Evangelist** Vol. I to XII Rs. 1300.00 per set (plus postage Rs. 150)
- (English version of Sri Ma Darshan)
- Life of M. and Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita** Rs. 150.00 (plus postage Rs. 50)
- A Short Life of M.** Rs. 50.00 (plus postage Rs. 40)

BENGALI SECTION

- Sri Ma Darshan** Vol. I to XVI Rs. 1225 per set (plus postage Rs. 150)

All enquiries and payments should be made to:



SRI MA TRUST

579, Sector 18-B, Chandigarh - 160 018 India

Phone: 91-172-272 44 60

email: SriMaTrust@yahoo.com



TOWARDS A BRIGHTER TOMORROW



₹ Finance



Healthcare



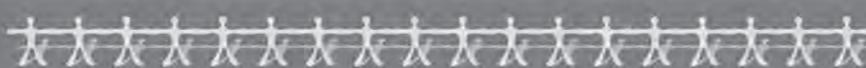
Hospitality



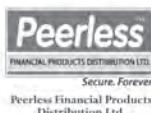
Housing

The Peerless General Finance & Investment Company Limited

- Peerless Financial Products Distribution Ltd.
- Peerless Financial Services Ltd.
- Peerless Funds Management Co. Ltd.
- Peerless Trust Management Co. Ltd.
- Peerless Securities Ltd.
- Peerless Hospital & B K Roy Research Centre
- Peerless Hotels Ltd.
- Bengal Peerless Housing Development Co. Ltd.
(a joint venture with West Bengal Housing Board)



Peerless
Smart Financial Solutions



Subsidiaries of The Peerless General Finance & Investment Company Limited



We Help You Create Wealth

Peerless Financial Services Ltd.



Trust. Invest. Progress.

Peerless Securities Ltd.

The Peerless General Finance & Investment Company Limited

Peerless Bhawan, 3 Esplanade East,

Kolkata 700 069

Ph: 033 2248 3001, 2248 3247

Fax: 033 2248 5197

Website: www.peerless.co.in

E-mail: feedback@peerless.co.in

CIN: U66010WB1932PLC007490



Peerless Hotels Ltd.

Subsidiaries of The Peerless General Finance & Investment Company Limited



Bengal Peerless Housing

Development Co. Ltd.

| A joint venture with

West Bengal Housing Board

SRI RAMAKRISHNA SHARANAM

Tamaso Ma Jyotirgamaya



ELECON POWER INFRASTRUCTURE PVT. LTD.



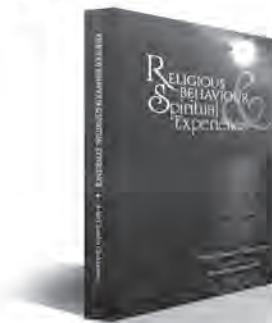
- Electrical & Fire monitoring system engineers.
- Consultant and Government licenced Engineers
- Engaged in the electrification of National Capital Region (Delhi Under BSES Rajdhani and Yamuna Power Ltd & Greater Noida under Noida Power Company Ltd)

Registered Office:
4/2A Siraj Ud Daullah Sarani
Kolkata 700 069
Ph: 033-40048573/ 9331203852

Corporate Branch:
85 A Kilokri (Top Floor)
New Delhi 110 014
Ph: 09312343592

Religious Behaviour & Spiritual Experience

—Asit Chandra Chakraborty
in collaboration with
Swami Priyavratananda



The religious have always intrigued the lay. Spiritual life and experience eludes ordinary understanding or so it seems. Senses fail to fathom spiritual truths. Science seems to be at loggerheads with spirituality. Is there any meeting ground? Can spiritual truths be investigated by a scientific mind using scientific techniques? Why do people take to spiritual life? Is there any scientific truth behind supra-normal experiences? These and other questions have been explored in this book.

Pages: 340 | Price: ₹ 100 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 35

Fear Not, Be Strong

—Swami Tathagatananda

Strength and fearlessness are the two prime virtues, among the others, which are the markers of health of a human being (both man and woman) and society. Every crime, antisocial and inhuman act is the outcome of lack of true strength and fearlessness. But what do we mean by strength, and what does fearlessness connote? Swami Tathagatananda has presented Vivekananda's views on this matter, which, we are sure, will shed new light on our understanding of these eternal virtues.

Pages: 56 | Price: ₹ 25 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 30

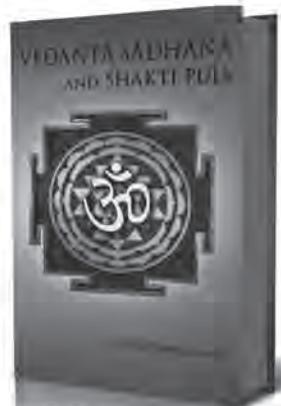


Vedanta Sadhana and Shakti Puja

—Swami Swahananda

Swami Swahananda, a direct disciple of Swami Vijnanananda and senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order in America, had spread the message of Vedanta in America for many decades. In this book he masterfully reconciles contradictory viewpoints, and shows how both Vedanta Sadhana and Shakti Puja can be practiced simultaneously in the light of Ramakrishna. A wonderful treatise for both beginners as well as serious practitioners.

Pages: 336 | Price: ₹ 70 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 40



Please write to:

ADVAITA ASHRAMA, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, India

Phones: 91-33-22644000 / 22640898 / 22866483, Email: mail@advaitaashrama.org



NAVAJEEVAN BLIND RELIEF CENTRE

(FREE HOME FOR THE BLIND, ORPHAN AND AGED)

TIRUCHANOOR, TIRUPATI-517503.PH:0877-2239992, 9908537528[Mob]

Email: sreenavajeevan@gmail.com website: www.navajeevan.org

38 YEARS OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY 1979 - 2017

OUR SERVICE CENTRES

| | | | |
|----|---|---|--|
| 1. | Navajeevan Schools & Hostels for Blind Children | — | Tirupati , Parlekhimundi, Golamunda |
| 2. | Navajeevan Free Eye Hospital | — | Tirupati |
| 3. | Navajeevan Free Home for Aged | — | Tirupati Parlekhimundi & Chennai |
| 4. | Navajeevan Dumb & Deaf Home | — | Patapatnam |
| 5. | Navajeevan Sharanagati Vridhashram | — | Tirupati |
| 6. | Navajeevan Rural Medical Centre | — | Berhampur (Orissa) |
| 7. | Navajeevan Eye Care Centres | — | Serango & Kalahandi (Orissa) |
| 8. | Navajeevan Orphan Children Homes | — | Tirupati, Parlekhimundi, Saluru, Golamunda, Berhampur, Pandukal, Vizag & Araku , Dundelmal |
| 9. | Navajeevan Veda Vidyalaya | — | Brahmapuram - Orissa [For Atharvan Vedam] |

Our Humble Request for Donation

- | | | |
|--|---|-------------|
| 1. Sponsor one day Annadan to Blind Children and aged people | — | Rs. 5000/- |
| 2. Sponsor 4 IOL Cataract Eye Operations | — | Rs. 10000/- |
| 3. Sponsor one blind child or Orphan child for one year | — | Rs. 6000/- |
| 4. Sponsor one poor aged person for one year | — | Rs. 5000/- |
| 5. Sponsor one free eye camp at Rural/Tribal area | — | Rs. 50000/- |

Donor devotees can send their contributions by cheque/DD/M.O to the above address on the occasion of birthday, Wedding day or any other special occasions and receive prasadam of Lord Balaji Venkateswara of Tirupati as blessings.

Contributions to NAVAJEEVAN BLIND RELIEF CENTRE, Tirupati are eligible for Tax Relief U/S 80G of Income Tax Act.

Our Bank Details For Online transfer :

Bank Name : Indian Bank , Gandhi Road Branch, Tirupati SB A/c No: 463789382, Account Holder : Navajeevan Blind Relief Centre, Branch Code: T036, IFSC code: IDIB000T036,

'We can attain the salvation through social work'

K.Sridhar Acharya
Founder/President

—Swami Vivekananda

We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.

Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

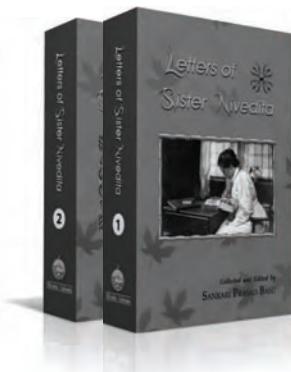
Swami Vivekananda



ABP

Letters of Sister Nivedita Vols. 1 & 2

— compiled & edited by Sankari Prasad Basu



Vol. 1 Pages: 751
 Vol. 2 Pages: 676
 Set Price: ₹ 800
 Packing & Postage: ₹ 150
 Total Price: ₹ 950

No real history of India dealing with the late nineteenth and early twentieth century shall ever escape the indelible impact that Sister Nivedita left on many areas of the country's national life. Her letters in these two volumes, besides revealing the magnificence of her brilliance and personality, tell the unique story of her love and sacrifice for a far off land that she lovingly adopted as her own. 1897 to 1911—the intervening years of growing turbulence in Indian history are the backdrop of nearly nine hundred letters Sister Nivedita wrote to her family, friends and acquaintances all over the world. These letters were painstakingly researched and collected by Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu, a noted researcher and writer during his time, over a period of two decades from Indian, European, and American sources. The letters throw fresh light on the history of an important age and its most representative personalities. For eager and inquisitive minds Nivedita's letters are invaluable source-material on many counts, as they reveal for the first time various unknown and startling facts about India during the Curzons, Mintos and Hardinges; draw us to the India of Vivekananda, Rabindranath and Aurobindo; and allow us a real picture of India groaning under the imperialistic rule and yet rising to a great purpose.



Please write to:

ADVAITA ASHRAMA, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, India

Phones: 91-33-22890898 / 22840210 / 22866483, Email: mail@advaitashrama.org

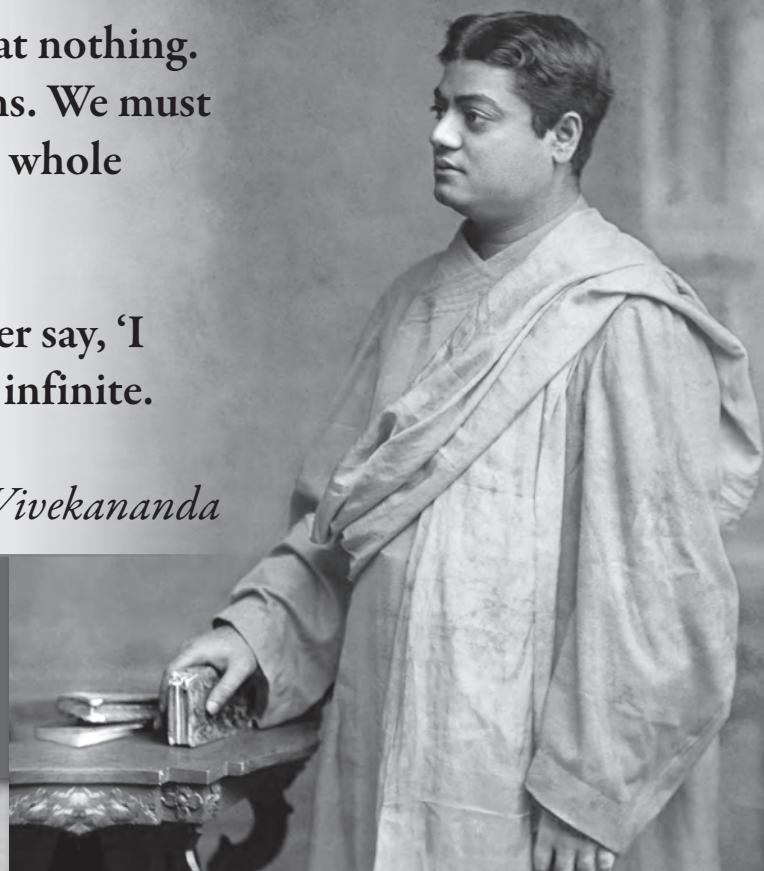
Each soul is potentially divine.
The goal is to manifest this
Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is
death.

Fear nothing, stop at nothing.
You will be like lions. We must
rouse India and the whole
world.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I
cannot', for you are infinite.

—Swami Vivekananda





LETTERS OF PRAVRAJIIKA MOKSHAPRANA

(Originally in Bengali, this book is a **Hindi translation**, released in commemoration of the birth centenary of Pravrajika Mokshaprana)

Pages: 176

Price: ₹ 100.00

Packing and Postage: ₹ 50.00 (For single copy)

The book is a collection of Sixty-Seven inspiring letters written by Pravrajika Mokshaprana, the second President of Sri Sarada Math, primarily addressed to her monastic as well as lay disciples, whose spiritual responsibility had been taken up by her.

These letters presents us with a treasure trove of spiritual gems which reflect the attention and anxiety of a mother, as well as the subtle pure mind of a spiritual mentor, whose guiding hand helps bring the sadhaka from the mundane to the divine plane. This book will certainly serve as a useful guide for every earnest spiritual seeker who seeks to cross this razor-edged path.

Please write to:

Secretary

Ramakrishna Sarada Ashrama
Dak Banglow Road, PO Devaprayag
Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand 249301

Ph: 09410520939, 09897452084

Email: rmksarada@gmail.com,

Website: www.rksaradadprayag.org.

The best guide in life is strength.
In religion, as in all other matters,
discard everything that weakens
you, have nothing to do with it.
—Swami Vivekananda

With Best Compliments From:



SVISSLABS
PRIVATE LIMITED

(Manufacturers of Active Pharmaceutical
Ingredients and Intermediates)

Regd. Off. & Fact. : Plot No.88 & 89, Phase - II,
Sipcot Industrial Complex, Ranipet - 632 403, Tamil Nadu.
Phone : 04172 - 244820, 651507, Tele Fax : 04172 - 244820
E-mail : rao@svisslabss.net Web Site : www.svisslabss.net

Swami Vivekananda's statue
at Museum, RKM New Delhi